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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

FOREIGN TRAVEL,

ON

LIFE, LITERATURE,

AND

Self-knowledge.

C4487

By Sir EGERTON BRYDGES, Bart.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

FOREIGN TRAVEL,

&c. &c.

VOL. II.

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New-Street-Square.

ABSTRACT OF THE LETTERS

IN THE SECOND VOLUME.

LETTER XXIX. p. 1.

Recollections of pleasures better than the realities; but past suffering embittered by recollection. Afflictions not equally dispensed. Personal experience of this. They are wrongly ascribed to one's own acts. Extraordinary proofs of treachery in the very writings of the guilty. My life has not all been spent in literary seclusion. A long-litigated family cause, gave me frightful peeps behind the curtain of public business; and near access to many known characters in high station. Experience gained in popular elections. Bodily constitution fitted to overcome anxiety and fatigue. Change in this respect which took place six-years ago. Numerous foes encountered. Envy and jealousy ruling passions among mankind. How to be defeated. Provincial passions. Few poets among country squires. Somerville's death. Desire of loco-motion. Age. Paths of ambition closed. Sorrows and difficulties have impeded and lowered the tone of my intellectual pursuits.

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LETTER XXXIX. p. 116.

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LETTER XLII. p. 136.

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LETTER XLIV. p. 146.

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LETTER XLV. p. 159.

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LETTER XLVI. p. 168.

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and *ruses*. Authors of the old school oppressed. Modern licence abused. Sound thinkers will mostly come at last to opinions sanctioned by time. Modern literature wants sincerity and feeling. Unlike that of Milton and Gray. Many modern poets ignorant of the principles of poetical invention.

LETTER XLVII. p. 179.

Many things proper for those letters anticipated in *Gnomica*, but will not be repeated here. Autobiography. Montaigne praised. Pascal. Descartes. Rousseau. Naïve confessions will be well received. Author's first impressions in youth too violent, and took away self-command. Not properly appreciated. Caused self-abasement, but excited exertion. Gray wanted fortitude in this respect. His foible of desiring to appear a fine gentleman. His school. An individual excepted. Bonstetten. Mathias. Affectations of singularity blamed; and also an over-love of conformity. The correctness of self-knowledge said by some to be defeated by partiality. This denied, where the mind is sound. Where the general principles are correct, the application will not be incorrect. There may be error in the estimate of what is adventitious. Estimate of mediocrity most likely to be fallacious. A poet who writes artificially will estimate by the amount of artificial faculties. The limit of autobiography to the pens of sound minds does not follow from these promises. Johnson's opinion. Facts may be curious, where the author's conclusions are rejected. Evil of the caprices of popular opinion. No shield against it, but a fixed standard of principles to appeal to.

LETTER XLVIII. p. 188.

How far calumnies are to be noticed. How far anxiety for esteem and good opinion is to be encouraged or repressed. All have their little ambitions and grounds of pride. The meanness of loving money more than fame. Uncertainty of glory. Most men who have fame are conscious of it. Arrogance often yielded to. Effects of jealousy. The stupid do not value distant fame. Nothing certain but intrinsic consciousness of worth. False notoriety, its consequences and character. Literary men subjected to a wider comparison than others. They must compete with the dead. Modern vanity refuses to learn from the lessons of time. Modern literature not sound.

LETTER XLIX. p. 198.

Foreign residence effaces prejudices. An island nurses them. Hasty travellers learn little. Fruits of residence in Italy, and at Geneva. England more luxurious than the Continent, but not so much at ease. Its wealth badly distributed, which causes an unwholesome population. Government too much encourages manufactures and commerce at the expence of agriculture. Vacillations on this subject have ruined the yeomanry, peasantry, and gentry. Equally artificial causes do not operate on the Continent; therefore their agriculture and commerce sounder. Great evil in what degrades the higher classes into lower spheres. Present state of England leads to this more than that of any other country not suffering by revolution. Mischiefs of the modern stock-jobbing race. Pitt's financial measures

in some degree counteracted their own evil tendency, but this counteraction now destroyed. Evil of drawing all the wealth to the capital. Constitution altered by change in the lords' house. Vast alteration since Pitt's accession to power. Fall of nobility in England occasioned by different causes from that on the Continent. This not a light mischief. A legislative nobility defensible on the principle of the general good. Foreign nobility mostly titular.

LETTER L. p. 211.

Author's neglect of written memoranda of his travels. This a breach of his own registered resolution. Memorandum of his visit to Coppet, 1819; of his visit to Campagna Diodati; of a tour round the Lake, in July 1819; of a visit to the baths of St. Gervais; of the itinerary of his journey into Italy; of the itinerary of his journey from Rome to Venice, and back to Geneva, 1821, &c. Impossibility of supplying details of journies by mere memory, after a lapse of time. Printed tours of Italy not now wanted. Hasty travellers cannot give a satisfactory account of the arts. Gray, the poet, an exception; value of his taste and knowledge in the arts. Tours of Eustace, Forsythe, and Lady Morgan. But written memorials wanted for higher matter than the pages of a mere tour-writer.

LETTER LI. p. 233.

Regret at a negligent choice of matters for these letters. Over-anxiety, mischievous. Restraint and effort great faults. Impossible to please all. The

age likes cavil, and authors sell it for lucre. Severity has lost part of its effect by an indiscriminate use of it. It has already checked the intellectual spirit of the country. Bad authors not crushed by it. Criticism ought not to be anonymous. Every thing may appear bad if put in a perverse light. All varieties of intellectual exertion desirable. Irregularity leads sometimes to fortunate beauties. System injurious to the due operation of many minds. What is intrinsically good, not destroyed by want of method. Skill and practice necessary to seize subtle thoughts. The author, though not self-satisfied, must go on in his own way. He has worked hard, if not judiciously. His unbroken labour; not occupied in trifles. Has been frank, but has wanted prudence, or rather cunning. Claims the praise of thinking for himself.

LETTER LII. p. 239.

Honest endeavours ought not to despair at seeming neglect. Efforts work unperceived. Intuitive sense when combined with imagination and sentiment, its fruit has vitality. Shakspeare talks of *glances* of the mind as attributes of the poet. By these glances truth is discovered in every walk of intellect. Genius is intuitive. What is good by rules, of less value. Genius accumulates masses of permanent ore. The author's uninterrupted performance of his own daily task. His inextinguishable love of literature. Objections made to the variety of his literary pursuits. Formerly his exclusiveness was blamed. Mankind will censure. Authors not to be discouraged. The author disclaims diffidence of

ability to protect his own legal rights. These rights being under the protection of the law, ought to be determined by it. Protection, if a trial by jury, on questions of fact. A lords' committee of privileges not a legal tribunal. Inconveniences attending it. Even juries may not do perfect justice, but nothing human is perfect. Trial by jury, a leading feature of *Magna Charta*.

LETTER LIII. p. 249.

The pleasures of the material world nothing, without the associations of the mind. Difference in human intellects. Genius comes from nature; its management depends on the possessor of it. There is an innate moral conscience, but implanted in various degrees among various persons; altered by future encouragement or neglect of it. Sense of grandeur and beauty more complex than sense of right and wrong. Genius which merely works for applause, not genuine. Men of the world cannot be great poets. We cannot be what we wish by mere endeavour without native power. Wits have no heart. Peculiarity and enthusiasm are the things which mark the poet, and confer interest on his character. Poetry not inconsistent with actual life. A poet lives more in thought than in action. Many have poetical feelings who are not poets; and many verse-writers have them not. Poets sometimes bad men, not often. Good poetry contains a large portion of moral feeling. There would be more good poetry, but for a wrong direction of native powers.

LETTER LIV. p. 258.

A true poet should be firm and placid in company. Odious pretensions of new nobles and their flatterers, who set themselves above genius, and acted so even to Lord Byron. Rank does not give intellect or taste. Affectation of condemning what is disliked, by calling it vulgar. Poets are too apt to be irritable in society. Their ease disturbed by inattention to little etiquettes. They sometimes expose themselves by a desire to shine in wrong places. In acquiring ease they often lose their energy. Indignation and discontent are sources of poetry. Grand passions will not bend. Men of the world cultivate the talent of ridicule. How a poet ought to conduct himself in company. The satire and scorn of poets feared by the world; but this satire and scorn often well founded, and well applied.

LETTER LV. p. 265.

Many things have been omitted in these letters till too late. Resolution not to be over-anxious as to them. Promise at outset performed. Opinion and sentiment may differ in different people. Next to novelty, originality desirable; but it must be on things important. Truths should be general. Force of thought and happiness of expression, give appearance of novelty. Few authors generalise. Ambition should be to give matter which affords citations applicable to other subjects.

LETTER LVI. p. 269.

Accidental interruption. Each day has its own impressions. A tone or look sufficient. Age should be calm at difference of opinion. Few think. Money-getters do not think. English society in a dangerous state. Distinction between want of reserve and want of judgment. Difficulty to measure abilities when applied to practice. Passions, &c. intervene. Abilities, when only abstract, still useful. Vast difference among men in native gifts of mind. Industry will go far in acquired knowledge. But genius is intuitive. It does what industry cannot reach. Such fruits rare, but necessary to the luxuries of the mind. These merits still denied by many, and called fantastic.

LETTER LVII. p. 274.

Disturbed by private business. Self-knowledge, a professed subject of these letters. Montaigne's Essays commended. His naïvete. Want of sincerity a common fault. Authors afraid to trust themselves, are conscious that with *them* opinion is often mere *will*. Characters must be estimated by what passes within. We want sentiments and feelings in biography, rather than facts. Genius necessary to delineate these. Mere facts give little instruction. Men of the world should not write biography of poets; they have no sympathy with their feelings. A poet is the reflector of human sensibilities. A poet aspires to have his superiority acknowledged. But men are often not estimated in proportion to their merits. Various causes operate to depress them, and to ele-

vate false pretensions. But abilities always show themselves to discerners.

LETTER LVIII. p. 280.

The nature of poetical invention repeated. A definition of it. Subordinate essentials. By this test the gradations of poetical merit must be measured. This will exclude observations on life and manners. Secondary invention exhibited in figurative style. These tests applied to Pope. Writers from mere memory. Equivocal invention by associating thought with imagery. The admission that the narrative of matter of fact is more useful than a story of fiction would not prove it to be *poetry*, because poetry is *invention*. Observation may be necessary for the preservation of verisimility.

LETTER LIX. p. 285.

The world does not pay respect according to merit. Artifice prevails over simplicity. The constituents of the world of fashion cannot be analysed; not made up mainly of high rank; their influence gained by finesse. They prevail in London beyond other capitals. Power of money. Modern nobility, a deteriorated class. Upstarts must yet exert pains and manœuvres. All the great, and all the weighty, keep aloof from these coteries; but wits and poetasters join them. Pride and meanness mixed. Illegitimate nobility. House of lords filled by Irish and Scotch peers. State of society in England, hollow. Distinctions of fashion baseless; *all*, contemptible. The scorn of one for the other absurd.

LETTER LX. p. 295.

Many contend that a poet may produce fine sentiments which he does not feel. This denied. But his actions may not conform. Literature ought to teach second wisdom. Inferior literature, a parade of words. Sincerity, the test of value. Query, whether *will* does not follow conviction? Common talk would make literature a play of chicanery. Then, it is an occupation in which pain is incurred, only to do evil. If fine poetry represents falsehood, it is not a grandeur, but a folly. He, who deems artifice necessary, has a consciousness of hollowness in himself. Common authors are cold and deceptive.

LETTER LXI. p. 300.

Author has lost his powers of reading; but has just read part of the *Trials of Margaret Lyndsay*. That novel praised; its descriptions and moral pathos beautiful. Author's feelings on approaching a close. Disturbed at the prospect of a long journey. England has forfeited his love. Alliances, of little benefit. None can protect themselves from the dishonest bitterness of modern criticism. The public delight to behold authors tear each other to pieces. Censure and abuse are easy. Paradise Lost could not stand against the modern system of criticism. False, that real merit is proof against such treatment! False, that common readers can distinguish between just and unjust censure and ridicule. Ridicule is not the test of truth.

LETTER LXII. p. 307,

This day the term of the author's letters. They might have been called *a diary of thoughts, &c.* but must be tried by their matter, not their title. Popular standards of value various and capricious. But there is a permanent standard among the wise. Form matters not. Substance ought to be true, important, and not stale. Objectors will be found to deny all. Objectors live on the sale of their bile. The desire to degrade, base. Advantages of what is detached and abrupt. But the dull must be taught mechanically. Essences will bear to be detached. Various opinions of what is original, and what is trivial. Certain topics stated, which cannot be trivial. Different judgments as to a proper mode of treating them. Sterling ore will finally prevail in any mode. There can be few truths positively new. Opinions and sentiments more valuable than plausible arguments. Johnson's judgment of what ought to be taught in schools.

SUPPLEMENTAL LETTERS.

LETTER I. p. 314.

Reflections on leaving Geneva. Its manners or localities familiar to the English. Its chief families. Literary characters. Notice of the country between Geneva and Lyons. Public library of Lyons, Palace of Arts, Hôtel de Ville, and Place des Terreaux. Author's retrospect of the last five years. Associations of early life.

LETTER II. p. 322.

Brief notice of the advantages of travelling.

LETTER III. p. 323.

Route from Lyons to Paris. First impressions on revisiting Paris. Its delightful attractions. Intellectual advantages.

ERRATA in Vol. II.

Page 73. line 12. for *Galeneche* read *Salenche.*
161. line 16. for *dissecti* read *disjecti.*
172. line 20. before *to* insert *not.*
204. line 24. for *depreciate* read *deprecate.*

NOTE.

DIARY left interrupted, Vol. II. p. 224. *now filled up* briefly.

Florence, April 20. 1820. Finished the tale of Sir *Ralph Willoughby*.

April 27. Left Florence for Leghorn.

May 15. Embarked on board an hired brig for *Naples*.

May 26. Entered Bay of Naples; came into harbour at four o'clock P. M.

May 29. Came on shore.

May 30. Took apartments in the *Ciaia*.

June 15. Dined at the ambassador's.

July 5. Revolution at Naples in the night.

July 9. Troops came in all night to the *Ciaia*.

July 10. Troops lie along the walls of *Villa Reale*, in front of *Ciaia*.

July 16. Grand Review of troops in the *Ciaia*.

July 25. News from Palermo. Anarchy there.

August 31. First proof of *Res Literariæ*.

September 6. Went to Pompeii.

September 20. Embarked in an open boat for *Sorrento*, half past 7 A. M. Caught in a storm about eight miles off, a little beyond *Torre del Greco*; returned; got back in torrents of rain a little after twelve.

December 10. Left Naples at half past 8. Stopped at *Capua*. Slept at *St. Agatha*.

December 11. Breakfasted at *Mola di Gaeta*. Passed *Iltri* and *Fondi*. Escorts to the barrier. Four dragoons from the barrier. Reached *Terracina* after dark. Road beset by brigands.

December 12. Left *Terracina* before light. Crossed the *Pontine* marshes 24 miles. Breakfasted at *Tre Ponti*. Slept at *Velletri*.

December 13. Breakfasted at *Albano*, reached *Rome* before 5 P. M. Lodged at *Hôtel de Ville de Paris*.

December 18. Removed to lodgings, *Piazza d'Espagna*.

December 19. Visited *St. Peters*.

December 23. Visited the Pope's palace, *Monte Cavallo*.

December 27. Went to the Pope's Chapel.

January 3. 1821. Visited *Canova's* and *Palazzo Doria*.

January 4. Visited *Colonna Palace*.

January 7. Visited *Vatican*.

January 8. Visited *Palazzo Barberini*.

January 18. Visited *Capitol*.

February 3. Proof of vol. ii. of *Res Literariæ*.

February 8. Proclamation about the *Austrians* passing to Naples.

February 18. *Borghesi Villa*.

February 19. *Villa Pamfili*.

For Continuation, see vol. ii. p. 224.

RECOLLECTIONS

OF

FOREIGN TRAVEL, &c.

LETTER XXIX.

19th August, 1824.

RECOLLECTIONS of pleasures are generally more delightful than the pleasures themselves; and sometimes, also, recollection turns what was in itself insipid into a high pleasure: but now and then it comes to embitter the past with a double sting. What in the hurry or the depth of misfortune or wrong brought with it its own alleviation by the exhausture or the stun, shows in the leisure of distant reflection all its misery or venom. It cannot be that afflictions are dealt out to all with tolerable equality. It may be said that we cannot

compare our own fate with that of others, because we cannot know the private sorrows to which others have been subjected: but there are sorrows which are among the most frightful and harrowing which can befal humanity; and these we know do not happen to all: they, therefore, to whom they do happen, cannot be denied to have been more than others exposed to unhappiness.

I have had griefs of this kind which cannot have had any concern with faults of my own. If I ever hint complaint, my good-natured friends are ready to remind me, that "I only reap the fruit of the seeds "of my own sowing!" — I may have sown seeds of which the fruit has been bitter; but the fruits I allude to were certainly never of my own sowing. I admit that I have never had a grain of worldly, serpentine wisdom, or prudence: but I have been pursued by merciless malignities, to which my franknesses, my indiscretions, my faults, (if the world will have it so,) could never give a plausible pretext. The actual evi-

dence of extraordinary treacheries has in four or five instances fallen by extraordinary coincidences into my own hands. Fate has thrown upon me unsought the proofs of the guilty in their own hand-writing: they have come to me in three instances among the papers of deceased persons to whom they were addressed; but what is more extraordinary, the memorandum of a guilty person once came into my hands among some other papers delivered over to me, among which it must have necessarily been overlooked; it was a document of most extraordinary singularity; the person was not content to think aloud; he actually was in the habit of making written memoranda of his dark thoughts, as they passed through his mind; and one of these papers not only registered what was coursing through his brain in regard to me, but that actual paper so, after his death, found its way to me. By that I learned a mystery, which I never before could explain or guess. Many of the parties have long gone to their graves: two or three are living; and if, by chance,

I speak of their treachery in general terms, I am told, with a sneer, that "I am apt to be very violent, and much prejudiced." — The sneer is of course returned by a smile of sufficient scorn.

It is probably supposed, that all my days have been passed in literary seclusion; and that I can have had little opportunity of seeing mankind upon the busy stage of the world, and in the conflict of action. This is not exactly the case: some important occasions have arisen, which justify me in saying that I have not been unengaged in some of the weighty business of life. I could not be involved for thirteen years at the bar of the Lords' House, in a great family-cause, (of which both the law and the history would be singularly curious if the truth could be freely spoken,) without having many peeps behind the curtain, and seeing much of private character — of the operation of intrigue; and the effects of a tribunal, composed of numerous and changing members, not under the discipline of professional rules, or habits of business. The

access which this affair caused to many men, now dead, who filled a high station in their day, enabled me to appreciate both talent and character from a near view.

I have learned by one popular election to parliament, and the canvass for another, lessons more instructive than pleasant; and when recalled through the vista of memory, cannot but feel some astonishment how I could go through such tumultuous scenes so little suited to my habits!

There was something happily planted by nature in my bodily constitution which brought on the deepest slumbers to counteract fatigue or grief. This balm never quitted me under the overwhelming misfortunes or dangers, till my arrival in Switzerland six years ago (Sept. 1818). It carried me through the tremendous year 1817; — it carried me through the strange and treacherous election-canvass of May and June, 1818; — it carried me through the burning heat of Paris in July and August, 1818, when the anxieties of my mind were enough to create a fever even in

the cold of Lapland! I cannot suppose it was the mountain-air of the snow-clad Alps or the Jura which took away this blessing from me, because it never returned in the genial climate of Italy. I now lie more hours awake than in slumber; and never sleep sound. The mighty blessing lasted while it was absolutely necessary; it would not have been possible for me to have supported life, such as difficulties and wrongs then made it to me, without this solace.

I have had singular foes to contend with in a variety of directions! Many of them have been busy, secret, and unappeasable! Even persons have incessantly persecuted me, to whom I know not that I have given the smallest cause of offence. I am aware of the operation of envy and jealousy among mankind; and my frankness obliges me to express with pain my conviction, that of all passions these two are the most operative in the world: I do not believe that even self-interest is so strong. We are sure that these are the passions which first show themselves in infants, almost, if not

quite, universally: — as years advance, all great and good minds overcome them; so long as they continue, they extinguish every other virtue. The effect of their influence in riper years is unqualified baseness. I do not think even corrupt self-interest so mischievous and hateful; because self-interest is not always contrary to the reputation and happiness of another; and envy and jealousy will often use as much intrigue as self-interest.

But it may be asked, if envy and jealousy be thus active and thus powerful, how any one ever succeeds in life? — Not only courage and perseverance, but insensibility will defeat them. It is morbid sensitiveness on which their wicked spells work. — Repulsion defeats them, like the fierce dog, who retires if looked firmly in the face. Yet there is no crime in this sensitiveness; — it is more often the accompaniment of genius than not.

Envy and jealousy are ferocious and busy in proportion as their sphere of action is narrow. They are no where, therefore, so

mischievous as when they are *provincial.* The first limits from which a literary man, above all others, should escape, are provincial limits. Somerville is almost the only country-gentleman, of poets, who occurs to me; and he drank himself to death at a middle age from uneasiness. The mind is made for great things, and will not, except where it is weak or dull, bear the torpor and stagnation of rural ease; and still less the mean and petty passions which are substituted to put it in motion. Without much corporeal exercise it is absolutely insufferable; and yet much corporeal exercise is apt to oppress and palsy the intellect.

In my latter days, I have a great desire of locomotion; and if the expence did not deter me, would spend my time in constantly moving (with proper equipages and accommodations) from country to country. Change of air gives elasticity to the worn frame; and change of images gives impulse to the exhausted mind. My hope in society is gone; my ambition is past; the openings of life are closed to me; all advantages, if

any could come, would come too late; neglect or persecution have clouded, or consumed, my days; my hair, rendered grey at thirty by early anxiety, is now as white as snow; and the furrows of my face betray the age of seventy, instead of the verge of sixty-two. I have endeavoured to keep my faculties and my heart always cheerful; and never have I, in my utmost sorrows, relaxed from literary occupation; — but I have necessarily had my attention distracted, and my powers enfeebled; and could not undertake those high intellectual tasks to which my ambition and my taste led me. I admit that I have done a good deal of idle work, and a good deal of technical work. To me, on looking back, it is wonderful that, under the circumstances, I did any thing.

LETTER XXX.

20th August, 1824.

I KNOW not if I have bent my mind to more exertion in any three years of my life than in the last thirty-six months. What cannot appear to the public is much more than what has appeared. I have been engaged in letters on private concerns, some of them to official men in high station, which would fill volumes. I wish they could appear, — for they deeply involve legal principles of constitutional right. Nor have my letters on literature to my friends been few or short. All this occupation has amused my mind, — and, better than this, I trust that it has continued to strengthen and expand it. I have in this period written and printed a tract *On the Laws of Inheritance in England, so far as they affect Peerage Rights*, of which I feel assured that it is utterly impossible to contradict the au-

thorities, arguments, or conclusions; and which, indeed, has been since collaterally confirmed by a case lately decided on solemn argument in the King's Bench. I have also written and printed my *Gnomica;* and have printed my *Odo,* a poem in six cantos, as well as composed a great part of it within the same time. I say nothing of my *bibliographical* compilations, because they are mere labour. I have but one mode of getting through my tasks, which is, to work early in the morning; — after noon, to *me* the whole day is vacancy. I have done all this in health extremely feeble and irritating; which I believe that I owe to the *Lake of Geneva.* Six years ago I took a house on its banks for a year. There, in the spring and summer of 1819, I accustomed myself to row out on its beautiful waters, surrounded by its magnificent scenery in the mountains of the Alps and Jura; and when I was fatigued and warm, I rested on my oars under a hot sun. In this situation, cold, sharp, capricious winds frequently spring up unexpectedly, and

cross the lake in different directions, from the ravines of the chaotic masses of rock and snow, or sweep down the length of the lake like a shooting star. By some of these I suppose that, on some occasion when I had overheated myself, the perspiration was stopped. From that day my frame has suffered inexpressibly; and though I received great benefit in the autumn of that year from the baths of St. Gervais in Savoy, of which I shall never forget the beautiful scenery, yet in the winter and spring following I was on the point of death at Florence: the genial and enchanting air of Naples once again restored me. On my return to Switzerland, 1821, the effects in some degree revived.

Never since have I resided literally, as then, on the *banks* of the lake; — and have since given up those boat-amusements, which, though so dangerous, were so delightful. That house, inconvenient and strait as it was, will be impressed on my memory as long as the faculty lasts. Released from the distraction of public busi-

ness, and the tiresome management of private affairs, I then gave up my mind, melancholy and dispirited as it was, to the whole sway of literature. Sleep had now left me; my nights were passed in the wild creations of an imagination that then never seemed to tire. The Christmas of 1818 was gathering upon me: I rose two hours before the light to a blazing wood-fire; and wrote down the outline, as far as I could recollect, of the tales which had suggested themselves to me in bed. I have thus the abstracts of not less than one hundred of these tales. I never filled up but two,—*Coningsby*, and *Lord Brokenhurst*. CONINGSBY was literally a dream.

There it was that in the spring, by way of diversifying my mental occupations, I wrote the inquiry into *Population and Riches*. There in April, in the little garden, pacing up and down the short walks, of which the wall was washed by the waves of the lake, I worked out many of those subtle ideas which cost me such intensity of distinction. I shunned all company,

and lived exclusively to my own hours, and my own undisturbed habits. Gradually the visits of old acquaintance, or the accidental and unsought formation of new, led me out of this solitude. But I fear that I am of an unconciliating nature; and do not easily make familiarities, nor am much fitted for them. I know not that I ever went out of company self-satisfied; nor ever engaged in a conversation, in which I did not regret something that I had incautiously said.

I have been pleased with the acquaintance of the literati of Geneva; and have been delighted to converse with the venerable and ingenious *Bonstetten* on his friend *Gray*, whom he visited at Cambridge as long ago as 1769. Nor can I but have felt honour at the intercourse I have had with *Sismondi*, whose talents, acquirements, and industry as an historian, critic, and political economist, are stupendous; and whose unassuming manners are as engaging as his genius is attractive. Nothing but a life dedicated to literature without swerv-

ing could have done what he has done. I have also to acknowledge the civilities of Prof. Prevost, a celebrated philosopher, scholar, and translator. I knew Prof. Pictet visiting in Kent, when I was a child; and after fifty years, recollected his person again as distinct as it was impressed upon me in boyhood.

It is unnecessary to describe Genevan habits: they are familiar to the English. It would be trite to recall their history: every one knows all that can be said of Calvin, Beza, D'Aubigné, Rousseau, Mad. de Staël.—Every one knows about Ferney, Coppet, Chamouni, and Mont Blanc; and most have heard of Campagne-Diodati at the adjoining village of Coligny, of which so many curious English beset the doors to see the room in which Lord Byron slept. I do not blame, but admire, their enthusiasm. I think that half the idle of the British nation must have been poured out upon Geneva in the last six years.

Among the rest, innumerable scribbling authors come to write *Tours and Descrip-*

tions. I have lived long enough to see authorship brought into contempt, by the multitudes of incompetent and silly persons who take up the pen. My aversion is bent against what is superficial. I require deep and original thinking,—but even this is not sufficient, unless there be also a rectitude of thinking. It may be said, that some arrive at this at last by progressive industry, who show little of it at the outset; but one requires occasional marks of it even from the very first effort; it is not safe to open the entrance-door of authorship without it; for otherwise, shoals will burst in, and overrun the dominions by storm.

Impressed with the necessity of this test, I sometimes look back with anxiety to my own early productions; and this leads me to set myself right with the public, as to a little poem which I desire not to have wrested from me. Three years ago I learned that my best sonnet was generally understood to be the production of one who died an octogenarian, before it was written. My *Sonnet on Echo and Silence* was repeated as

the composition of *Henry Brooke*, the author of *Gustavus Vasa*. Mr. Wordsworth had so learned it many years before from a collection of sonnets edited by Coleridge, at Bristol. My friend and near relation, before whom this claim occurred, convinced Wordsworth of his error, by showing him the original edition of my poems. I will insert a copy of the sonnet, and then say something more of it.

SONNET ON ECHO AND SILENCE.

In eddying course when leaves began to fly,
And Autumn in her lap the store to strew,
As mid wild scenes I chanced the muse to woo,
Thro' glens untrod and woods that frown'd on high,
Two sleeping Nymphs with wonder mute I spy! —
And lo, she's gone! — in robe of dark-green hue,
'Twas ECHO from her sister SILENCE flew:
For quick the hunter's horn resounded to the sky!
In shade affrighted Silence melts away.
Not so her sister! — hark, for onward still
With far-heard step she takes her listening way,
Bounding from rock to rock, and hill to hill!
Ah, mark the merry maid in mockful play
With thousand mimic tones the laughing forest fill.

This sonnet was published as one of my juvenile poems in March, 1785. It was

written a year or two before. *Maty* selected it as one of the specimens in his *Review* of these poems in *May*, 1785. But I happen to have an unimpeachable living witness, that the composition was my own. The present Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, my school-fellow, class-fellow, and earliest and most intimate friend, the confidential companion of all my juvenile studies, by whose severe and classical taste I was urged to correct it over and over again, till by repeated labour I brought it into its present form, will bear testimony from his own personal knowledge that it is mine. I happen, too, to possess the MS. of each successive shape which it took. Mr. *Wordsworth*, as soon he was apprised of his mistake, has had the goodness to acknowledge the claim, in the kindest and most flattering manner; and Mr. *Coleridge* has promised to take the earliest opportunity of correcting his error. I confess that what Mr. W.'s partiality has said of this sonnet has made me anxious to retain the credit of it.

It ought to be original, for it cost me intensity of thought to bring it into so narrow a shape: I drew the first idea from these words, in a short poem of *John Walters of Ruthen*, (who died about 1797,) "Echo and Silence, Sister-maids." All the rest of the conception, imagery, and words are exclusively my own. At that time, I studied the manner of Collins with enthusiastic intenseness. From October, 1780, to October, 1784, I gave myself up exclusively to English poetry. On my first arrival at Cambridge, the *sixteen sonnets* (1788) of *John Bampfylde* fell into my hands, and I believe inspired me with the ambition to excel in the sonnet; but the first sonnet I wrote was that addressed to *Miss Mann* in August, 1782, beginning "Sweet gentle angel." I have preserved but one earlier copy of verses, the *Lines to Miss Kenrick*, about January, 1782. In those days the public ear would have endured nothing which was not correct, if not elegant; the modern freedom (vigour, if

it be so,) was then unknown, and would not have been relished.

One month after the publication of this juvenile volume, all the spell of ambition was dissolved for ever for me. I had in the enthusiasm of my nature looked up to the fame of a poet as something sacred and magical. I had dreamed mad dreams of hope and glory; and it seemed to me that my reception was a reception of coldness, which drove back the fire upon my heart. There it smouldered inwards for some years, consuming me with a black burning melancholy. I had no spirit; my faculties were shrivelled up, like dry scorched leaves, ready to fall into dust at a touch. I had no amusements: I could not entirely give up books; and so I pored upon mouldy, arid, genealogies. I sunk in my own estimation down into helpless feebleness. My native shyness and reserve redoubled upon me; — and thus I lost the prime years of my youth, from 23 to 28. The success and popularity of *Mary de Clifford*, written with the care-

less rapidity of entire despair, then gave a little excitement to my spirits. The sheets were sent in letters to the press as they were written; and the first sheet was put into the post before ten lines of the second were written, or thought of, or without any formed design, or idea of the matter which was to fill the volume: every sheet was left to suggest its successor by the association of ideas. All the poetry rose out of the progress of the tale; and was written in the order in which it stands.

These confessions are, I believe, very indiscreet; the public requires to be managed, and dealt cunningly with: even Lord Byron, I suspect, did not disdain to use management with the public.

LETTER XXXI.

21st Aug. 1824.

IT is strange how wonderfully the view of objects is improved by distance. This is called the effect of memory, — it cannot be memory; for it is the business of memory to reflect exactly, unless, indeed, it be a memory only of the prominent parts. But then the difficulty arises here, that such prominent parts as were disagreeable are faded away. Memory is the duration of an impression; and I cannot see why the most strong parts of an impression should not remain longest, whether good or bad. I think, therefore, when we look back on objects with more pleasure than they gave us while present, the pleasure arises from some other faculty than memory. It seems to me to be a change, worked by the power of imagination. This might be ascertained

by watching the effects of memory in those who otherwise betray a deficiency of the imaginative power: if in such persons the recollection does not bring with it a sensation improved above that of the reality, the position will be confirmed, and *vice versâ*.

It is often a reproach to me that I recall with delight the images of things long after they are past, which seemed when present to give me little enjoyment. If by this it is meant that I affect what I do not feel, I firmly and indignantly repel the insinuation. To be affected is in my habitual conviction a radical fault, which strikes at the root of all that is valuable in eloquence and poetry. It is my unqualified persuasion that to pretend a feeling one has not experienced, or to overstate it, always fails of the end proposed. If, therefore, I do in fact feel pleasures in retrospect, which I did not feel, or feel in the same degree, at the moment, it is because this seeming inconsistency is a part of my nature, and a part, also, I doubt not, of the nature of a large portion of mankind.

But a looker-on is apt to be a good deal deceived, as to what is experienced by another at the instant scenes are passing before him. A strong sensibility is not always displeased because it has a grave countenance, or is a little irritable, or even a little violent, and now and then perhaps seemingly bitter. Reflection changes the degree, but I do not believe that it changes the general nature of what originally gave pain or pleasure. Whether if it did so it would do harm, is another question. I do not think it would.

These observations have been suggested to me by recalling to my mind the six or seven months passed at Naples, from the end of May to 9th Dec. 1820. I cannot look back upon that scenery and that climate without seeming to have before my eyes a vision of fairy land. Travellers are fond of ambitious representations of the very reverse of what they have actually experienced. I sincerely think that there is a mean and contemptible want of integrity in this. I recollect that on our first arrival at Naples

in the end of May, the heat for the first fortnight was almost intolerable; and the mosquitos were so troublesome, that they would allow little sleep. For my part, whether from that or any other cause, I at that crisis lost my appetite, grew feverish, and could not enjoy even the glorious prospect before me. Before June had expired, these ill effects ceased. It was a very hot summer, yet the sea-breezes tempered the effects of the burning sun, so that the heat was from this time less oppressive than a hot day at Geneva. The opportunity of sea-bathing also braced and re-invigorated the frame.

But the scenery is such as, without exaggeration, exceeds all power of language to give an idea of: indeed I agree with Mason that verbal descriptions never convey a precise idea of an actual scene, and that the attempt to be very exact always defeats the purpose. Those parts of the city which command a view of *the bay* are placed in the most magnificent of all imaginable situations. The whole circumference of

its shores is varied by such an inexpressible sublimity of outlines, mountains, rocks, promontories, inlets, castles, towers, towns, hamlets, villas, and cottages, under skies from which is reflected every possible tint of brilliance, which also falls with equal change of effulgence on the ocean itself that is thus surrounded, that the scenery to those coming from northern atmospheres, and more sterile and tamer forms of earth, seems absolute enchantment. This grandeur is still augmented by the near view of Vesuvius on the left, throwing out its volcanic explosions of liquid flame.

There is something in the sun-shiny hues of every thing around which strikes a serene cheerfulness to the heart. All is animation.

And "hark! how thro' the peopled air
The busy murmur glows!
The insect-youth are on the wing,
Eager to taste the honey'd spring,
And float amid the liquid noon:
Some lightly o'er the current skim;
Some show their gaily-gilded trim,
Quick glancing to the sun!"

The whole city swarms with life, the streets are bursting with thick movement; yet nothing is tumultuous, not fierce, *defiant*, and furious with bitter discontent, like a London mob! — not overwhelming to the spirits, and threatening to bear all before it in a sweep of destruction! The drive of a morning before breakfast from the *Ciaia* along the sea-side to the palace, and so up the busy *Toledo* and back, is the most rich, the most varied, the most exquisitely beautiful, and the most animated, probably in the world. — The evening-drive to the heights which form the curves of the bay on the other side is as sublime as this is busy and cheerful.

The vast concourse of moving carriages, of which those of the nobles approach nearest to the English of any on the Continent in splendour of appearance, always keeps the attention alive, and distracts the pressing incumbency of cares to which humanity is subject. The number of nobility, new as well as old, is very great, and some of the ancient families are much decayed in

fortune, but new titles or new riches do not here destroy the priority of respect to venerable and illustrious birth. An acknowledged representative of a high and famous historical name, even without a title or wealth, is given place before new princes, for there are not a few princes of new families.

If we may judge from the manner in which the *Carbonari* revolution was effected, we must infer that the Neapolitans are a singularly good natured and unresentful people. It was attended by no scenes of blood, nor any violences. The people of the *Abruzzi* are hard, muscular, and fierce-looking, but I heard of no acts which confirmed these indications. We saw many thousands of them march in, intermingled with the soldiers, in their peasants' dress.

I forbear from entering into the political discussion of this unsuccessful insurrection. It appears to me ridiculous in a traveller, whose residence is transient, to pretend to that knowledge of causes and under-movements, which can justify him in giving an

opinion of the rectitude, the policy, or necessity of acts which involve such important and numerous interests. There may be deep oppression, where it does not appear to a stranger, and there may be occasions where revolutions are justifiable, if the success is probable, and the means used are legitimate. But these occasions combined with these circumstances are very rare. It is obvious that an indiscreet attempt to throw off chains only doubles the irons and the links upon the victim. A constitutional government is always desirable, because power always tends to abuse. The freedom from bloodshed in this revolution, and the good humour with which it was effected, deserve every praise; but there were surely numerous mistakes, and some breaches of faith in the subsequent conduct of it; and I am inclined to suspect that there was a great deal of mischief brooding under ground, which common eyes could not penetrate. "Fair laughs the storm" when there is a "whirlwind" behind, "hush'd in grim repose."

The effects upon the surface were curious, even to the most dull observer. As the press became free, ten or twenty newspapers were set up in a fortnight; and pamphlets containing every sort of wild political speculation issued out to cover every bookseller's counter: the golden age was believed to be returned again; and the citizens and middle ranks of people were in a delirium of joy; while a thousand nobles threw themselves back in their carriages, sullen and dejected, and the Duke of Calabria's carriages were filled with little children, who did nothing but bow and kiss their weary hands to the mob. The King retired, and shut himself up from the scene of mortification, and apprehended danger.

I once attended the short-lived parliament, which consisted only of one assembly, and heard them debate with some imitation of the English manner. One cardinal (a a very aged man) was sitting among them: I forget his name. Scarce any of the nobles were returned; and they would probably very soon have been a proscribed

body: the kingly power still left was merely nominal: the king had no virtual *veto;* and on this perhaps hinged the downfall of this new scene of things. It appeared to me that the royal family was saved by the arrival of Sir Graham Moore with his squadron. The English were warned over and over to depart, — and at last we went.

During August and September, the array of the troops in the *Ciaia* to be inspected by General Pepé made a most magnificent appearance. We more than once saw a line of above 10,000 well dressed and well equipped soldiers pass our windows. The Neapolitan men are well grown, and well formed: the line of guards is the finest I have ever seen.

In the midst of all this moving scene, I could not forego my love of literature. Here I amused myself with collecting books and studying Petrarch, and here I printed at the free press my first volume of *Res Literariæ.* I began to read the great poet's thick folios of Latin letters; and at one time had hopes that I should have perseverance to

go through them; but parts are very tedious, and I abandoned it as lost time; I then intended to recompile the poet's life from these authentic sources; it ended in the long article which stands first in *Res Literariæ*. But I did not limit myself to these antiquarian pursuits. I here wrote the major part of the third volume of *The Hall of Hellingsley*, and (if I recollect) part of the second volume. The first volume was begun in England in November, 1817; a chapter was added at Paris, July, 1818; a small part was written at Geneva, 1819: the end of volume first and part of volume second were written at Florence, 1820: the last sheet or two were finished at Geneva, in June, 1821.

It was a grief to us to leave Naples: the days in December before we quitted it were as mild, and sun-shiny, and beautiful, as the finest spring in England or Switzerland. The last morning-drive we took to Pozzuoli will never be effaced from my memory. A little while before, we visited the palace of Capo de Monti: the rooms

were empty, and looked deserted; and I little thought the old king would ever come back to inhabit it in state again: I saw the two palaces at Portici, with the same impressions. I do not love great changes, and am deeply afflicted with melancholy, whenever I see ancient grandeur obscured. I know that these are most unfashionable feelings, and such as the world calls the result of prejudice and bigotry. But it is my pride and boast to pretend to no opinions which I do not feel, and to be ashamed of none which I do feel. I love freedom; and I am sure I have no reason to love power. I have received no kindness, nor even justice, from authority; and the modern aristocracy I have every reason to hate and scorn: I have received the deepest injuries from some of them; and have not been much less hurt by the coldness and desertion of others, who have been bound to me by strong ties of blood. But many of them are gone to their graves; and I will not, as strongly as I might, disturb their ashes. I have seen enough of base-

ness in high blood and high titles to give me fair cause, if I could act from narrow feelings, to wish to see them trampled in the dust. I know that birth and rank cannot cure a mean intellect and a mean heart. I know that the very first of these may have the tricks of a pettifogger, and the fierce and perfidious envy and jealousy of a low man of pride and ambition defeated in his projects to rise. But, above all, I think the most provoking, the most impolitic, and most unsound, is an illegitimate aristocracy: what that is, it is unnecessary to define; common sense and common experience show it every day. And this I am bound to confess, that the best, the ablest, and the wisest men I have ever known, have not been men of birth.

I have suspected, that men much elevated above their original station would be either haughty or supple... I have seen it otherwise; while those in whose veins flowed the unmingled blood of princes and ancient nobles, and who added to their power the independent means of inexhaust-

ible wealth, have been as abject as men-milliners, whose business it is to bow and smile all their days behind a counter, to dames, and misses, and dandies. — The ancient nobility of England have deserted their posts, or have taken up the intriguing character of the mongrels with whom they have mixed.

LETTER XXXII.

22d August, 1824.

THE English, in general, with whom I have conversed, do not seem to feel the same pleasure from Naples as I have expressed. They talk of its suffocating heat; and they do not seem to be equally struck with the magnificence of its scenery. I believe there are some constitutions to which the volcanic soil is insufferable. Both in the Latin and Italian poems of Sannazarius, and in the Latin poems of Pontanus, will be found exquisite descriptions of the unrivalled beauty and grandeur of appearances which this country, and especially this coast, exhibit. The modern Latin poetry of the Italians, written in the two first centuries after the revival of literature, is in general elegant, as may be seen in the collection entitled *Carmina Italorum*, in eleven vols. 8vo. *Florence*, 1719, — a book

now extremely rare in Italy; though, at Naples, I found many excellent books, not extravagantly dear.

We regretted that the frightful disturbances in Sicily prevented our crossing over to see that fine island at this crisis. There is great hatred between the Sicilians and Neapolitans; and the former have ample reason for it: they have been cruelly used by their continental neighbours. In this struggle there was reason to suppose that they would have established their independence: but the English ministry thought proper not to interfere.

The pictures of Salvator Rosa best remind us of Neapolitan scenery. In general the specimens of the arts are not so fine at Naples as at Rome or Florence. All sorts of English flock hither, as every where else on the Continent. I believe that Mr. *Mathias*, the poet, has been for some years a permanent resident here; and here I perceive that he has lately printed his Italian translation of *Armstrong's Art of Health*. I think that *Rogers* was at Naples when

we were there; but I did not see him. The Duchess of Devonshire spent part of the autumn here. Her magnificent folio edition of the Italian translation of Virgil, (I think *Annibal Caro*'s,) adorned with beautifully engraved designs, printed at Rome by Romanis, will now be sought by collectors. Here we took leave of the lively, delightful, and generous-hearted Lord *Caulfield*, who was so soon after lost to the world by a premature death. Every one recollects the compliment paid by Lord Byron to his mother's form. English every where appeared in rides and drives: Lord Elgin, Lord Colchester, Mr. Howard of Corby, and other well-known names, appeared among the travellers. For my part, I have been so far from seeking general society through life, that few men have less personal intimates, or even common acquaintance, than I have. I am not aware that I ever yet obtruded myself on a human being; and I had much rather run the hazard of incurring the censure of pride and reserve, than of officiousness, or than put it in the

power of any one to return a slight for a civility. I would not willingly give pain to any one, but I cannot put myself at another's capricious mercy. I am sure that I never yet designedly refused to return civility for civility: but my nature will not allow me to encounter chances in this way; for this reason, I know that my manners appear cold and repulsive; but I am sure that my heart is not cold. I am said to freeze all who address me: it is my misfortune, not my will. Untoward circumstances have operated to confirm natural defects. I have been placed in awkward situations; I have been crossed, and injured, and oppressed: I have been ousted of my inheritances; I have been calumniated; and when I have done my best, and wasted my enthusiasm in generous efforts, I have never been cheered.

If then I frown, and am surly, and doubtful of intended civility, what candid mind can wonder? I have worked hard, and not relaxed when the flame of almost any other man's heart would have been ex-

tinguished by a twentieth part of the chills and blights which have fallen on me; and still I work, unexhausted and unchecked. There are days when I work hard, nine or even ten hours without interruption. I work for praise, but it never comes: I have spent my time, my spirits, my faculties, and my money for it. And now, in my old age, I can still write, at least with *warmth*, if not with strength. But why should I suffer any one to insult or slight me? Why should I permit a new noble to look down upon me? I deny his superiority of blood; I care not for his wealth: a stock-jobber, a contractor, or a slave-merchant, will beat him in wealth, be he as rich as he will; and if he has made his way by his intellectual exertions, then, at least, he ought to have consideration of me, who have sacrificed all for intellectual pursuits. I put myself in no one's way: why will any one try to disturb me by incivility and disrespect? A new duke or new marquis may think himself better than me; but that will not make him so, — and

the best plan will be, to keep out of each other's way.

I never yet thought that there was any excuse for the insolence of birth: I never dreamed that it was to be set up, but as a protection against insult. I never could pay Burns or Bloomfield one atom less of respect on account of their low origin; nay, to surmount its obstacles, and to have noble thoughts and refined sentiments in the midst of early and habitual poverty and meanness, increased, instead of having diminished, the grounds of admiration for them. If in any thing they were entitled to less attention, it was only so far as their *manners partook* of their origin. To look back with complacence on historical ancestors, is no mark of either pride, insolence, or vanity. It is an exercise of intellect and imagination, which it would be strictly and absolutely stupid not to indulge. To be unconcerned for the past, and to feel no interest in those from whom we draw our blood, is a sort of insensibility which approaches to brutal ignorance. And where other qualities are

equal, the state which would not prefer those of most illustrious birth, is deficient in wisdom and justice.

The old English nobility are now reduced to a very small number; and of these too large a portion have deserted their posts, sentiments, and habits. It is, indeed, very difficult in these days to preserve them: society has been taken to pieces, and formed anew: the manufacturing, commercial, stock-jobbing, and contract-jobbing, habits of the country, are constantly pressing upon it with such force in every way, that it is scarce possible for it to keep its ground. "And why should it?" says the liberal politician; "wealth is only thus obtaining "its legitimate place."—I do not think so; wealth does not want the aid of rank and titles; it is powerful enough in itself.—The world are too selfish, and too sensual, to refuse to wealth all its due respect and influence. There are better things than riches in a state; and the richest is neither the most happy, nor always the most strong. We hear of the superabundant wealth of England; but is it well dis-

tributed? Are the different ranks of life easy? — No, not one! — All are straining, and struggling; for their means are not equal to their calls. As far as wealth contributes to happiness, I believe that of the little republic of Geneva does for its people what all the incalculable riches of Great Britain cannot do for its boasted wealthy population. Every one is rich who lives beneath his means. An income of 100,000*l.* a year does not make him so, who spends 110,000*l.* a year! When I was a boy, the country-gentlemen were at their ease: now they cannot live. And it is not difficult to see the further mischief which is now meditating by the shallow, but mercenary, doctrine, of the *Ricardo-ites!*

All good draws with it its alloy of evil: the wealth, the luxuries, and the freedom of England have their counterpoises in various ways; its population is excessively corrupt; and the laxity of police, which is an incident of its freedom, is frightful. — Its laws are become so perplexed, and dilatory, that in almost every case the remedy is worse than the disease.

LETTER XXXIII.

23d August, 1824.

NAPLES is, as a city, the most pleasant capital I have yet seen; and next to it, Florence. Of London it is not necessary to say here what I think; it would add to my enemies when there is no occasion, — and I have already more than enough. But I may say, that when young I never approached it without horror, and never left it without delight. I had an uncle, (the only uncle I ever remember,) — he lived to seventy, — the most cheerful and amiable country-gentleman whom imagination can form, — a perfect sportsman, — the best rider of his day, — who when he could no longer follow the severer chace of the fox, rode after his beagles with admirable skill till within three weeks of his death, — but caught a cold in his vocation,

in a severe wintry day, which brought him to his grave: — he had been a member of the Middle Temple after he left college, and kept all his terms, and he was accustomed to say, that when he had mounted *Shooter's Hill*, and saw black London in the smoke beneath him, he grew sick, his heart sunk, and his spirits never rose again, till having mounted the other steep of the same hill, he could look back, and laugh his leave of it! Yet he did not love mere solitude: he was the most lively and talkative companion whom I have ever known, of infinite humour, and some wit.

I remember London such as it was when Miss Burney's *Cecilia* came out, and such as she describes it in that novel; — when the great public entertainment of the season was *Ranelagh*, to which no equal substitute has ever succeeded; — when the town was beginning to be very ridiculous with a thousand follies; — when East Indians and West Indians were by their glitter driving all the old families out of society; but when still they thought it necessary to perch upon

landed property in England, and re-issue from it. The modern dazzlers are content to issue directly from the alley. (Indeed stock-jobbing is now a principal employ of every great city in Europe; and even the small city of Geneva occupies itself with little else.) I need not dwell on the evil or the meanness of this species of gambling, which does not add an atom to the wealth of nations, but only transfers from one to another by a system of habitual chicaneries. I remember English society thus almost literally turned topsy-turvy: scarce a name that now flourishes in fashion had then been even heard of. It may be asked what was the mental vigour of an age that could give popularity to Hayley's *Triumphs of Temper?* But we then had Johnson, Burke, Robertson, Gibbon, and Thomas Warton.

London is frightfully and unmanageably overgrown; and the consequence is, that half its people live by deception: we every where tread upon mines; nothing is safe. But I will trust my pen no farther on this head: I will return to Italy. Florence is

a beautifully-built, lively, peaceful, well-governed city: its treasures of art are inexhaustible, and its nobles are polite, and, if not hospitable, showy in their palaces and equipages. Its public library, which was much enriched by Magliabechi, is a grand treasure. The library of MSS. also collected by the Medicis is known by name to all the world; and the Riccardi library, now bought by the Grand Duke, is superb. The climate of Florence is (unfortunately) severe, and unsuited to many valetudinarians. I know not if its effect on me was accidental: a three-months' illness brought me to the brink of the grave. The drives in the beautiful Cassini, as spring came on, and the leaves of those sweet alleys began to open, contributed to restore me. At the end of April, 1820, we quitted Florence for Leghorn. We passed through *Pisa;* but only stopped to change horses. There had lately died the amiable and good-natured Francis (4th) Earl of Guilford; and there, in the flower of his age, had died the vigorous-minded Francis Horner, on whose lips

the whole House of Commons had lately hung, during his last session of attendance; and here was destined to be, in a few months, the last eventful abode of the immortal Byron, before his final expedition to Greece. No spirit whispered to me this coming honour, or I would have sojourned at least a day in this honoured city. We staid nearly three weeks at Leghorn, and owe very much to the great civility and hospitality of Mr. *Macbean*. Leghorn is a busy city, and the harbour is very amusing. About the middle of May we embarked on board a hired merchant-brig, to traverse the Mediterranean for Naples; and had a long, hot, and tiresome voyage.

I like the treasures of art at Rome; but the city, its habits, and its scenery, are dull; and to me the climate is heavy, oppressive, and unhealthy, even in winter. It was an historical time. We saw thirty thousand Austrians bivouacked without the walls in their way to Naples. The dispersion of the *Colonna* library gave me an opportunity of collecting a vast mass of Italian poetry

for my son's library in England. I saw little of Bologna. The streets of Ferrara are not *grass-grown*, as Lord Byron has called them. Tasso's vault made me so sick, that I could not see this once-celebrated city, full of historical events, or his palace, or its library, with pleasure; but I gazed upon the autographs of poor Tasso, and of livelier Ariosto. Venice disappointed me: St. Mark, the Rialto, the "Bridge of Sighs," and its crumbling palaces; its gondoliers, and the Lido, and the Adriatic! Twice we passed Padua, once so well known in literary history, and whence the splendid edition of Petrarch lately issued, with a new portrait of Laura, engraved by Morghen. Turin is not among the most striking capitals of Italy: all was *triste*, when we saw it; but the Piedmontese revolution had just terminated, and the royal family were not returned. (May, 1821.)

LETTER XXXIV.

24th August, 1824.

TRUE poetry cannot be contrary to reason and good sense. I have no taste for what is called "a mere idle play of the *fancy*" (meaning imagination, for there can be no idle play of the *fancy*; the fancy must represent what exists externally). True principles of poetry lead to firm conduct in the practice of it: without them no poet will continue to write in these days of capricious, foolish, and malignant criticism. But not every poet will continue to write even then; some have a morbid sensitiveness, which is fatal to bold and just perseverance. I have written little poetry, because I have felt that I had not due encouragement; but this I consider to have been an unworthy weakness. When a man is conscious of rectitude, and feels

assured that he is not deficient in faculties for so innocent, so refined, and so useful a pursuit, he ought not to suffer himself to be discouraged; he ought to know, and he cannot but know if he reflects, that he who can work with tolerable effect at the commencement, and without much labour, may, by discipline, industry, and progressive skill, advance beyond the point at which he set out, to a distance which will fill even himself with ineffable astonishment. The powers of imagination grow every day by due exercise, and improve not only in activity and splendour, but in versimility and accuracy; while language becomes more and more easy, more nervous, and more just.

It is impossible that he who has a keen sensibility, a vivid fancy, and a lively imagination, should fail, if he keeps these under the control of reason, to produce substantial fruit, which would not only interest but instruct mankind, by continued endeavour and unrelaxing exertion. Of all absurd positions the most absurd is, that the fields

of poetry are exhausted; it would not be more absurd to say, that the whole of this terrestrial globe is properly explored, cultivated, and civilized. What are called *the flowers of poetry* may be exhausted; but it is pity there should be any *flowers;* all sound and deep poetry is better without them. The fact is, that the generality of candidates for poetical fame are too timid and too feeble to touch untilled ground; and it may be true, that that which has been long in cultivation is a good deal worn out.

An entire misapprehension of the nature of poetry by those demi-critics, and demi-pretenders to taste, who are apt to give the *ton* to the multitude, is the main cause of these evils. The art is supposed to be a matter of *finesse*, and frivolous ornament, and empty play of words. Its genuine object is to convey the most affecting and forcible moral truths, in the most powerful and palpable manner. Unless all impressible objects, all causes of emotion, and all matter for the operation of the intellect, are

exhausted, poetry cannot be exhausted; as long as "many-coloured life" affords new diversities, and new combinations, there must be food for it. Every day, every hour of our existence raises some new topic which awakens a rational curiosity to discuss and master it; the difficuly lies in finding the ability to comprehend, illustrate, and embody it. He who pursues unsubstantial ornament, like vapoury shadows, will find himself mocked by perpetual delusions, till he sinks into languor, and at last into impotence. The struggle to outdo nature, or give a sickly substitute for it, which may seem more beautiful to a corrupt taste, ends not merely in disappointment, but in despair.

Manly representations of interesting truths drawn by the imagination can never finally fail. If the outlines be at first a little feeble, with occasional inaccuracies, and the tints not sufficiently deep, rich, and mellow, all these will be obtained by gradual practice. But fitful energies will do little: they will only produce impatience, and loss of self-confidence, from finding that new

attempts do not bring with them augmented power. It is necessary that there should be a growing facility to counteract the decrease of hope, which always results from our more enlarged acquaintance with the world.

I am far from meaning to insinuate that progressive toil will countervail original deficiency. There must be a vividness of the senses and the heart, and a strong native understanding to begin with. But I say that these cannot effectively succeed without habitual industry; and that with this aid they are sure to succeed, if they will go straight forward, manlily and without affectation. They may not gain popularity, because that depends either upon intrigue or upon the whim of a senseless rabble, and because at present the course in which it shall run is under the guidance of one or two factions; but it will succeed with those of solid judgment, whose praise alone is worth acquiring.

Every artifice of poetry which catches the vulgar mind, and by which technical

critics pronounce its merit, is not only no proof of genius, but is an infallible proof of the contrary; it is at best the mark of a petty and frivolous ingenuity, on which it is impossible for any great mind to waste its attention. When poetry is called childish, and despised by grave understandings, this is the sort of poetry which brings that character upon it.

There has scarcely existed the intellect and heart which has been entirely lifted above the influence of popular opinion. Every great poet has yielded to introduce some trifling flowers or petty ornaments in conformity to the public demand, and has broken his energy and spirit by some mechanical devices, and fantastic decorations, which have put him out of humour with himself and his own powers, and brought him to contend on a level with poetasters and tricksters.

Morbid sensibility and diffidence are not necessary tests of deficient genius: they may co-exist with the most splended endowments of imagination; but they very

greatly endanger their effulgence, and probably will breed clouds to hide them for ever. Milton is said by Johnson to have been "confident of his own abilities," and "acquainted with his own genius." Without self-confidence nothing can be done; where the self-confidence is ill placed, it leads to all that is ridiculous; every one must exert it at his own peril. Great faculties *must* be discouraged, if they regard public opinion; and, therefore, over-regard to public opinion is fatal to genuine and grand poetry. If Lord Byron had not been above it, he could not have written as mightily as he has written.

All young authors commence with a good deal of submission to the public taste, even if they be of the boldest spirit; they therefore never show their powers at once; but if they be not of the boldest spirit, the discouragement they will incur will probably prevent their showing them at all. Mediocrity, dulness, and folly, are never checked by discouragement.

Some will contend, plausibly at least,

that a just self-confidence is a necessary concomitant of ability; that the light opinion of the multitude cannot alter a conviction of a truth; and that it is in the superiority over the knowledge possessed by this multitude that the ability consists. But all have not a heart firm enough to follow up their own convictions, even though they may be as strong as those of others, who have the courage to act upon them. The genius of these timid persons is commonly lost.

Nor is it always easy, when very young, to have a decidedly firm conviction against the current of popular persuasion: a stout conviction must often be worked out by long musing, and a sober weighing of contrary arguments. What is fantastic or monstrous is called for: a young genius is not quite sure of the rectitude of his own taste in being disgusted with it; but of this he is sure, that a charlatan will do well in this way, when himself would be a bungler; and, therefore, he retires from the contest. The greater part of the mass of English

poetry is but the result of the minor mechanism of poetical composition, and totally deficient in its soul and essential matter.

I never wrote any poetry deliberately, and with proper industry and exertion, after the completion of my twenty-second year. The fit came upon me at long intervals; and I dashed it out in careless despair, while the impulse lasted. I had had no more cause to be dissatisfied with my first reception than others, and perhaps less than many; but I was both over-sensitive, and unreasonable. I had then a sort of visionary enthusiasm with regard to fame, which experience soon blighted, though it did not cure. Every successful poetical writer has had more or less perseverance before he attained his end. Day after day, and year after year, he ought to work at his task; and if he has native power, the public will finally be worn out, and will yield to him. But he must not set his heart on worldly ambitions; he must not entangle himself with coarse business, or lower the tone of

his sentiments and thoughts by ordinary society; he must get dominion over the spiritual world around him by the intense application of his intellectual powers in solitude and abstraction.

I now fear nobody, and my expectations are so sobered, that I can work energetically with such slight impulse as is within practical reach. But it is too late: my time is short; and even in that short space I must expect growing imbecility and decay. While I have *mens sana in corpore sano* I shall work on. I *must* have employment, both intellectual and innocent; and my days are too far advanced to engage in the business of the world any more. I shall never want subjects, if I have the ability or strength to execute them. I have in my common-place books the hints of unexecuted designs, which would employ a long life; and new ones occur to me every day. I have at length found out that there is no mental pleasure like dwelling intensely for a time on one topic, or one task; and that distraction and dispersion

lead to fatigue and *ennui*. Nothing can ever be superfluous which contains sound sense, or elevated or tender and virtuous sentiment, expressed with manliness and force. It is affectation which ruins every thing; and I call every thing affectation which is imitated, but most of all, which is mimicked.

In every department of literature, the instant an author starts up with a manner of his own, and succeeds with the public, a hundred mocking birds open their mouths to repeat his tones: they catch the form, but never the spirit; and by a want of keeping, and a perverse exaggeration both of beauties and defects, they not only are disgusting, but throw the contagion of their perverted copy on the original itself. Thus of Sir Walter Scott's novels, (or, perhaps, I must say, of those of the *author of Waverley*,) I have not seen one of the numerous copies which has not had this effect.

There are fewer unaffected writers than is commonly supposed, as there are fewer

original; — but not every affected writer is unoriginal, nor every unoriginal writer affected. Sometimes there is an originality, though a bad originality, in affectation; and sometimes an unoriginal writer copies without affectation, being desirous to express, as clearly and simply as he can, what he undertakes to deliver, but being incapable of thinking for himself, and therefore obliged to borrow the thoughts from another; there is, however, a great chance that this last, in borrowing the matter, will copy the manner, and then he becomes affected. One of the beauties of *Cowper's Letters* is his extraordinary freedom from all affectation.

They who turn their observation inward upon themselves must notice that every day a number of imperfect conceptions glance upon them: they have a twilight view of certain truths, which it requires time, leisure, and effort to develope. These are the ideas which patient and progressive labour, operating on native talent, will gradually conquer. They will come

out into shape and form one by one, till they form a body, which may be a pyramid of fame to the builder.

It may be said that these thoughts, though worked out of the writer's own brain, may have been anticipated by the toil and ingenuity of others; but what is not borrowed has always something of novelty in matter or manner, some shades of difference even in the idea; and different language always gives a freshness which itself creates novelty. I see, however, no reason to suppose that many new and important distinctions do not yet remain to be made; or that, as long as a writer is original, and has good sense, he can ever labour in vain. A large portion of the books published would greatly disencumber the world, if they were thrown into the flames, because they are affected, unoriginal, trivial, and stupid. They have neither depth nor accuracy of thought; and if they make pretensions to imagination, they are merely the false combinations of a technical memory, instead

of being the inventions formed from the stores of a true fancy.

It is difficult to guess how the common trash which amuses vulgar readers can afford them any entertainment, — instruction it certainly cannot afford. It probably stirs their minds with a confusion of ideas, which gives them an indistinct momentary pleasure, — and with this they are content. It can leave no discriminative traces behind; and the shadowy figures which it half pictured for a moment are wiped out by its whimsical and discordant successor.

If any of the authors of this trash have good sense in private life, they do not carry it into literature, where they only exercise a loaded and indigested memory, and a corrupt or insipid taste. If no one writes except with sincerity, and nothing but what he believes, then no one with good sense, and a good heart, can write idly: he might not write brilliantly, or amusingly; for that would require fancy, sensibility, and imagination.

As to invention, and especially poetical invention, as it is the first quality of genius, so it is the rarest. And where it exists, we then come to the quality and quantity of it. The first must be determined according to the gradations of sublimity, pathos, and beauty. There are intellectual inventions as well as material, where the interest does not depend on the number of common characters who are livelily and happily combined in a series of entertaining events, and act naturally, easily, and with a *naïveté* of animation, under the circumstances in which they are skilfully placed, but on the force, passion, power of mind of a few characters, who are shown only in a few less complicated, but more striking positions, in which the understanding is exercised and exalted, or by which the heart is deeply touched and torn. There may be a much greater fertility of invention in the former of these, but the quality is not so high. There is vast fertility in imagining endless varieties of common incidents befalling common characters, and the natural

feelings, sentiments, reflections, and conversations attending those incidents: this is vast abundance of untired imagination acting upon inexhaustible acuteness of observance and retentiveness of memory. But still quality will go far in weighing against fertility.

Whatever teaches false views of life is an illegitimate exercise of imagination. For this reason I protest against all the common novels, as well as against the common poetry. They are a strange manufacture which the corrupt demands of the modern press have raised upon dunghills and hot-beds: they have nothing in them of correct design or composition; they have no powerful or just thoughts, — no beautiful or natural sentiments, — no glowing imagery, and no characters such as are to be found in life, or, if they were to be found, such as would be worth describing. A large portion of them come from female pens, of no experience in the world, and of a low class of intellect.

But among persons of great powers there

are few standard works produced; a large portion are sunk by some strong positive faults; I say *positive*, because feebleness is inconsistent with great powers: but they must be deficient in some important essential; and judgment seems the common defect, which prevents their seeing truth; for no man, I suspect, embraces falsehood who really perceives truth.

LETTER XXXV.

25th August, 1824.

More time of my nights is passed in thinking than in sleeping; but in the morning almost all is fled, like dreams: not an hundredth part can I remember; and what I remember is the least valuable, and only remembered imperfectly. If I could recall and record it, the work of each night would almost make half a volume. And my dreams are commonly as busy as my waking thoughts. They often seem to approach to strong rationality; and sometimes suggest arguments which I could not have devised when awake: but sometimes they are terrific, and sometimes painful, and leave traces, on waking, of the revival of those stings of regret which are among the perpetual banes of my ease.

There is an uniform complaint of my gravity and my melancholy; and therefore I suppose it must be well founded. Not only my looks are said to be chill, but all my tales, and all their characters, are censured as mournful, and delighting, as it were, in affliction and misfortune. I paint the images which involuntarily haunt my mind,—which dwell within me, and around me: I pride myself in avoiding every thing factitious. I know not what should early in life have given me this gloom; for my days of childhood were not days of sorrow or darkness: I did not begin to experience adversity till after the publication of my first poems. I believe, however, that persons of a certain imagination, and a certain sensibility, are always melancholy.

I consider that the world has not been kind to me; and I do not bear it with the surly stern pride of Lord Byron. During my six years' absence on the Continent I have reason to believe that I have been sometimes treated with unprovoked disrespect by the hireling part of the press.

I do not deserve it of them. They who live by literature owe me something. To me they owe the extension of their property in their labours to the end of their lives, if they survive the term of twenty-eight years; and this is surely in many cases a boon. I myself have already survived that term eleven years in my first publication; and in *Mary, de Clifford* I have survived it four years. The late Mrs. Elizabeth Carter survived her earliest publication sixty-seven years; so that in her case it would have extended her right the addition of thirty-nine years. I worked hard, and should (as most of the intelligent members of that parliament will allow) have carried my point for the amendment of the *Copyright Act*, in defiance of all the weight of the universities, had I not been cut short by the dissolution of the parliament in June, 1818. The professional part of the press, therefore, ought to spare me unmerited slights. But they may go on, if it answer their purpose in filling a *piquant* article, when they have a task to perform before they can re-

ceive their daily pay; or when they can gratify the enmity towards me of some one who can be of use to them, and whose smiles they are courting. Age has made me calm, and somewhat more resolute, and regardless of ungenerous or ignorant censure. First or last, what is true and just will find its due place; and if it be not so, no praise or flattery will long keep it afloat. Let it be that I over-estimate myself, — I injure no one but myself.

If all those energies which still continue to burn on the verge of sixty-two are ill directed and useless, —if they are a vapoury flame which produces neither warmth nor light, but glimmers, and flashes, and struggles, like wet fuel on a cold hearth, surrounded by damps and blights, — the cost of toil and strength is all to me, — the annoyance nothing to others.

When I look back beyond the six years I have passed out of England, it seems a long and countless age, and the distance so great, that I can scarcely see distinctly the point whence I set out. I can never se-

riously and assuredly persuade myself that I shall see my native country again: perhaps my bones may rest there, — not as Lord Byron's have done, covered with glory, and intensely wept over by an awe-struck and idolizing people, but silently and without notice landed beneath the frown of that beetling and immortal cliff pictured by Shakspeare, and borne in humble obscurity a few short miles to the rustic church of the wooded hill which is separated but a few paces from the neglected chamber where the light of this world first beamed upon me. I do not remember that I have visited that chamber for forty years; and it is almost as long since I slept in the house. If I reach England once more, probably I shall never have spirits to look upon those scenes again.

New abodes can never intertwine themselves with our being in this way. As we have resolved to quit Geneva in a few weeks, something of retrospect is naturally awakened. I have received some kind-

nesses and attentions here, and therefore I would say of it nothing but what is good; but the climate is bad, and therefore I know not by what fascination we have stayed here so long. There is an attraction in the various things which are here accommodated to English habits. The *campagnes* are convenient, though I cannot say *cheap;* and numerous English are always to be found here, — at least on their passage to and from Italy. In this way we have in three years seen a great change, and had intercourse with some pleasant acquaintance. In the winter, also, the Genevans are sociable in their dances and evening parties. I will confess that dinner-parties are more to my taste, and those are principally to be found among the English. Here is an excellent public library of ancient standard works, and a *Société de Lecture*, where a certain portion of modern publications, and all the French journals, are to be found. The old books are little to the taste of the modern *literati* of Geneva, whose pursuits are principally in phi-

losophy, chemistry, botany, natural history, agriculture, and political economy. *Sismondi*, indeed, is an indefatigable reader of all the original historians of Europe; and *Dumont* is eminently acute as a philosophical jurist, as his book (digested from Bentham) on *Judicial Evidence* proves. It does not seem to be the climate of poetry and poetical invention, though it produced Rousseau. The mountainous scenery of Savoy, between Geneva and Chamouni and St. Gervais, including the town of Bonneville and Galenche, is indescribably picturesque. This was anciently the district of the petty sovereignty of *Faucigny*; at last absorbed in the house of Savoy, who commenced as *Counts of Maurienne* in the tenth or eleventh century, and contrived also to swallow up the sovereign territories of the *Counts of the Genevois*, which lay on Savoy, principally between this city, over which they claimed to be princes, and Maurienne, which runs to *Mont-Cenis*. From the time of their independence, three centuries ago, there is an inherited antipathy

between the Genevans and the house of Savoy. I have felt some additional interest in all these houses, because I can trace their various blood in my veins with that of the great house of *Grandson*, once so flourishing in the *Pays de Vaud*, by the simplest and easiest historical (not mere private) evidence. All matters of descent, I know, are out of fashion; and it is very unpopular to notice them: my critical enemies may make what they will, therefore, of this little breach of rule: it fills but half-a-dozen lines.

I cannot count what acquisitions I have made to my knowledge in my hours of study at this place. It seems to me to have been considerable. At one time I gave myself up to political economy; at another to bibliography; at another to invention; at another to criticism; at another to ethics and psychology. I take up things with ardour, and I pursue them for a time with energetic labour. I have scarcely an amusement but literature: I require little exercise, and little company. In the last three

months my habits of application have been singularly steady; and as long as I am writing, my pleasure is intense and unalloyed. About noon, unless I can continue writing beyond that hour, (which I sometimes do for three more hours,) languor comes on; and the rest of the day is, for the most part, a blank to me. Of evenings I can neither read nor write: it was not so when I was young; then an evening book was the height of luxury.

I read nothing at college but English poetry, and thus effaced much of my classical knowledge: mathematics I hated, and indulged against it not a very decent scorn. We had, too, an eminent man for one of our tutors, — Milner, afterwards Dean of Carlisle; a man of great good nature, no classic, of uncouth person and manners, and of singular habits; a great metaphysician and mathematician, of deep and original powers: he latterly took a religious turn, which gave a new character to the college, of which he some years after my time became president.

LETTER XXXVI.

26th August, 1824.

BURKE, in his eulogy on Fox, at the end of his *speech* on that statesman's *East India Bill,* 1st Dec. 1783, has the following memorable words: "He has faults; but they "are faults that, though they may in a "small degree tarnish the lustre, and some- "times impede the march of his abilities, "have nothing in them to impede the fire "of great virtues. In those faults there is "no mixture of deceit, of hypocrisy, of "pride, of ferocity, of complexional des- "potism, or want of feeling for the dis- "tresses of mankind. His are faults which "might exist in a descendant of Henry IV. "of France, as they did exist in that "father of his country."

This speech, and that on the Nabob of Arcot's debts, 28th Feb. 1785, are two of the finest specimens of oratory which human genius ever produced; and I will ven-

ture to say, that the first, as far as concerns the duty, as well as necessity, of the interference of parliament to take the power out of the hands of the East India Company, and the second in all its parts, are quite as acute and incontrovertible in argument as they are splendid in oratory. It is singular that, unlike any other parliamentary speech of a past date, they have not lost a particle of their interest. It is not the purpose of these letters to be compilations, and filled with extracts; but for once I will break my rule, that I may introduce to the young what, perhaps, they will not look for in gone-by speeches, even of Burke. It seems to me one of the finest passages of human, uninspired prose in all the literature of the world.

"Hyder Ali,—having terminated his disputes with every enemy, and every rival, who buried their mutual animosities in their common detestation against the creditors of the Nabob of Arcot,—drew from every quarter whatever a savage ferocity could add to his new rudiments

" in the arts of destruction; and com-
" pounding all the materials of fury, havock,
" and desolation into one black cloud, he
" hung for a while on the declivities of
" the mountains: whilst the authors of all
" these evils were idly and stupidly gazing
" on this menacing meteor, which black-
" ened all their horizon, it suddenly burst,
" and poured down the whole of its con-
" tents on the plains of the Carnatic. —
" Then ensued a scene of woe, the like of
" which no eye had seen, no heart con-
" ceived, and which no tongue can ade-
" quately tell. All the horrors of war
" before known, or heard of, were mercy
" to that new havock. A storm of universal
" fire blasted every field, consumed every
" house, destroyed every temple. The
" miserable inhabitants flying from their
" flaming villages, in part were slaugh-
" tered; others, without regard to sex, to
" age, to the respect of rank, or sacredness
" of function, fathers torn from children,
" husbands from wives, enveloped in a
" whirlwind of cavalry, and amidst the

" goading spears of drivers, and the tram-
" pling of pursuing horses, were swept into
" captivity in an unknown and hostile land.
" Those, who were able to evade this tem-
" pest, fled to the walled cities. But es-
" caping from fire, sword, and exile, they
" fell into the jaws of famine," &c.

The affair of the Nabob of Arcot's debts must always hang heavy on the memory of Pitt. The truth is, that he came into power on the shoulders of the East-Indian interest; and was tied, hand and foot. I do not mean that I approve *all* the *provisions* of Fox's India Bill: it would have established an *imperium in imperio;* or, rather, a *contra-imperium.* Fox was inordinately ambitious; and Burke's warmth was now and then too violent for his judgment. I remember distinctly that turbulent period of furious factions, and all the caricature prints of Fox as *Emperor of the East.* It is strange to see how the populace can be led; and how completely they are at the mercy of the dupery of artful wealth. At that moment, the Nabob of Arcot's debts

had bought not only the population of the towns, but the *rural* population of England. This is not a harsh assertion: it could not be otherwise; for the people took a part against their own natural passions and prejudices: they could have no common feeling with Indian peculation; nor, if the provisions of the remedial bill were an encroachment on the powers of the crown, was that an effect at all unpalatable to their desires: they would rather have hailed it; especially when it is considered that a general opinion then prevailed, that the powers of the crown had been latterly too much augmented.

The result of this conflict was a mighty change (whether for the better or the worse) in the whole structure of the society and constitution of England, which is even to this moment in full operation, and so will continue, while the government lasts. By the dissolution of parliament, and the general election that ensued, (viz. in spring, 1784,) the Whig families were displaced from the representation of the

counties, and such great popular cities and towns as they had formerly held an hereditary influence over; and a new class of families, or new individuals directly from India, or from the mercantile part of London connected with the Indian trade, put in their stead. Thus all the old associations and influences, which from the moment of their overthrow were treated as *weak prejudices* justly trampled under foot, expired. The new opinions were sown upon a willing and prepared soil; Mr. Pitt had been cradled in them, and heard them infused with his first ideas. Lord Chatham had had to stand alone against a proud and overbearing aristocracy, and to break them by the personal force of energetic decision, talents, genius, and eloquence; the son therefore was predisposed to think that there was nothing but justice in the overthrow of all these old influences. But how could he do otherwise than feel the wisdom of his own inherited opinions, when they lifted him at once, at the age of twenty-five, into the situation of *Prime Minister*,

in possession of irresistible power, with the two houses of parliament at his beck, and the King full of gratitude and admiration, acknowledging him to be his protector, and the anchor of the crown?

It is notorious that Pitt, in this situation, commenced with bestowing a profusion of new honours of every sort; and they were lavished with an utter defiance of these (*miscalled*) ancient prejudices. It would be invidious to specify very broadly, distinctly, and detailedly, all the particulars by which this assertion might be illustrated. The character of the house of peers began at this time to be totally altered; and not in number merely. There are (*or rather used to be*) various classes of gentry of descent; and mere gentilitial descent, without something of an *historical* name and alliance, and a certain kind of inherited territory, did not in common aspire to move much out of its order. Men have at all times come occasionally, by odd reverses, by sudden chances and changes of name and fortune, into wealth and respectability;

but they were long in working the stream clear again. Then again there was a certain age, certain mental qualities, and certain habits of business and society, to which respect was paid. All these things also were *prejudices* in the philosophy of the new school. A new system was to be built up of new materials from beginning to end: every thing old, whatever had any thing of the incumbrance and bent of old forms, was in the way. Boys, and they to whom every thing was novel, were the most ductile and pliable scholars; and he who would work most freely, and do without enquiry whatever he was bid, was the servant for the fashion of the day. It was an Augean stable, which it had been necessary to cleanse; and "new brooms were brought in to sweep clean."

I do not say, that many reforms were not wanted; and that old men had not often continued in office after their power of service had expired; and that important places had not often been filled by family influence, when there was no capacity to

do the duty; and that aristocratical prejudices had not usurped functions and ranks which it was contrary to the interests of the state that they should usurp. I do not deny that there was a great deal of absurd pride and stiffness in the old aristocracy; and that even provincial families often held a local predominance, which their qualities and merits did not justify. I should have admired a bold, firm, enlightened, and moderate resistance and counteraction to all these abuses.

But my position is this, that whatever prejudices and whatever abuses there were, it was not a true sense of the necessity of reforming them, — it was not a virtuous principle, nor the ground which has been assigned for the change, — but the *monied* influence, sprung from the *Nabob of Arcot's debts*, which did it, and was, in fact, the final triumph of the mercantile and manufacturing over the landed interest.

I cannot be ignorant, that even admitting all this to be true, it is but the regard of a petty space of time; and, therefore, but a

partial and insulated view of the great interests of the nation. Good is frequently worked out of evil; and Providence, apparently, often allows beneficial ends to be worked out of strange and irregular means. It may be said, that whatever were the modes by which Mr. Pitt came into power, he exercised the power once gained for the prosperity and salvation of Great Britain. He was, no doubt, a man of gigantic talents, and, I firmly believe, pure patriotism. But I do think he had two grand faults; one natural, — the other, deficiency of acquirement. I sincerely think, that he wanted both great genius, and great knowledge. The latter his boyish entrance into high office rendered it impossible for him to acquire. He was a man of amazing rapidity and force of comprehension of the thoughts of others, and of power of expressing them with far more clearness, strength, and eloquence than their originators; and, he could command all such details as were requisite with admirable precision. Of all which were offered to him

he had a quick and vigorous judgment, which would always choose the best; but I can perceive no traces that he could think for himself, except in the way of judgment or decision.

If we assume this intellectual character of Pitt, not to do him injustice, but to be an accurate limit of his powers, (whereas his blind worshippers will charge it as an odious depreciation,) still there was enough to enable him to have been a very efficient statesman in common times, and to account for the apparent prosperity of the first years of his administration. Among the effects of that which had taken place at his entrance into power was a general stir, which had given activity, energy, and freshness to all the departments of the state. It so happened, that the tide of human affairs, and course of human intellect, totally independent of Pitt, led at this time to a practical attention to some of the operative principles of *Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations*. The distresses of the American war had turned a thousand ingenious minds

to the discussion of the national debt, and the principles of finance and revenue. And this led to the application of new contrivances and skill to the circulating medium, or medium of exchange, — the hinge on which all the wealth of a country turns. Pitt was a man of all others least bigoted to old ways; he readily, therefore, gave ear and patronage to all these opening improvements; and hence that abundant prosperity which so rapidly advanced during the first years of his premiership.

With the French Revolution arose difficulties quite novel, both in nature and degree. In the progress of that extraordinary eruption, which endangered all established governments, Pitt showed, at various periods, an energy, a fortitude, and a fertility of resources which probably saved the country; but whether he acted with equal foresight and energy at the commencement, is another question. If Burke's arguments and opinions were right, he did not. At the outset he took a view of the spirit and tendency of the French Revo-

lution very different from that of Burke! He did not see in it any danger to other countries; and, I suspect, rather thought that it would be for the benefit of England. At this early crisis it seems to me probable, that by a different line of conduct he might have gone far in crushing it. What consequences would have grown out of the success of such an attempt I do not by this supposition presage, or characterise, whether as beneficial or mischievous; for I do not mean to assume, that it would have been beneficial to have established arbitrary power.

It does not seem to me that the excess of either one or the other of these two evils was a necessary consequence of the state of affairs. If taken nearer the commencement, the Revolution might have been so far checked, as to have settled quietly in a moderate reform. I am aware that we have no right to interfere in the internal regulations of a people. The question is, whether long before January, 1793, the French Revolution had not taken a character

highly dangerous to other states. Burke's arguments on these topics remain recorded for the sober judgment of posterity: if they are light, or not predominant, then Pitt stands acquitted; but if they are convincing, then I think Pitt was not a very great statesman.

The next plea in this celebrated man's favour will be the manner in which he carried us through the contest. This will scarcely be a valid plea, if he suffered the contest to grow up, when it might have been averted. But waving this preliminary objection, many powerful charges may be made against the manner in which the contest was carried on. There was no grand design; no striking at the heart: all was petty detail; and the advantage always apparently uppermost in our minister's mind was *Commerce*, — always "Commerce!" — "Gain "to our commerce!" — "Cripple and de- "stroy our enemy's commerce!" — "En- "large our possessions!" — "Take the ene- "my's islands and colonies!" — but never strike home to the part where the dreadful

and death-doing disease lies. It was not a question of commerce; but of those laws and civil establishments by which commerce is protected. Commerce and riches are nothing, if they cannot be securely enjoyed when gained.

But it will be urged, that the vigour and fertility of scheme and management with which the premier found resources to carry on with due strength the enormous expences of this war could never have been displayed by any other statesman. I doubt if another would have been found equally bold in the use of his means. But to be fertile in the discovery of resources has in it, perhaps, more of evil than of good, if it tempts to a very lavish, unnecessary, and wasteful expenditure. I believe it is generally admitted, that there never was such a wasteful expenditure as in that war, Pitt set the example of. The incredible profusion of public money in barracks, fortifications, &c. seemed to be indulged as if wealth could be created as fast as paper could be stamped. There was a delusion at that

time in the Pitt schemes of finance, which, it is too evident, did not see to the bottom of things. There was a temporary appearance of prosperity and riches, far beyond the reality; and there was a frightful gambling away means, totally reckless of the future consequences. The premier did not foresee, or did not regard, this result, which alone would render any waste criminal, — that even if the national wealth was not thus diminished, property must thus rapidly change hands, and society be turned topsy-turvy.

Mr. Pitt seems to have inherited from Lord Chatham the maxim, that *what was to be done must be done, cost what it would.* This is a maxim calculated to ensure present success at the expence of future destruction. There are extreme cases to which it is applicable; — urgent occasions, where every thing depends on a move; but it is inexpressibly dangerous, and even fatal, to adopt it as a general principle of conduct. There is no wisdom in a niggardly expenditure which will not secure the end,

where the end is worth more than the requisite cost; but a liberal application of public monies can only be justified by a duly-weighed regard to the advantages proposed to be acquired. Whatever saved us from the fraternization of French revolutionary fury was well bought at any price; but we were not bound to pay more than would attain our object; nay, every million, or half million, we paid extra, endangered our end; for we knew not how long the contest would last.

It will be deemed very presumptuous to question the soundness of the premier's notions on the nature of wealth, and the solid grounds of national prosperity, so far as it depends on wealth; but mature reflection induces me to entertain strong doubts on this subject. He estimated the strength of a nation by its riches; and yet he was careless of economising them. Perhaps it will be answered, that he wanted them for use, and not for avarice. Whatever was his object, he desired to have them for his country; and this unqualified desire

led him to another strange notion, — a persuasion of the exclusive usefulness of what are called *productive labourers*, as members of society. If this was his idea, he probably understood productive in its most enlarged sense, taking all who contribute by mind, as well as by manual labour, to production, — but limiting "production" to riches. Under this persuasion, it was natural for him to be utterly careless of the transfer of wealth from the old proprietors into new hands, or rather to rejoice at it, as rewarding those who were in his eyes the most worthy.

There are no traces of his having shown any fondness or esteem for literature, or the arts. Still less did he seem to consider the use of those living in independence and leisure, perhaps under the protecting shade of hereditary honours, and dispensing civility and refinement, and the influence of the respect of ancient associations. He considered wealth an end, not a means, except a means of political power and protection; and, therefore, approved steps, which led, as he supposed, to the greatest

quantity of riches, without regard to their distribution, or tendency to confer individual happiness.

We ought not, however, to forget, that all the lights which have been now thrown on political economy had not been exhibited in Mr. Pitt's time. It was not easy to foresee all the alarming effects of such a sudden and vast increase of national disbursement, thrown among the dependent and laborious classes of society, by temporary employment, and fluctuating demands for manufacture as well as food; and that a population would be raised beyond what could be supported consistent with the rights of property, and that due preservation and distribution of capital, without which riches themselves must soon be exhausted for want of the necessary means of reproduction.

If there be any force in these arguments and observations, they detract from the unqualified praise which the majority of voices have conferred on Mr. Pitt's talents and his ministry; but there are other con-

siderations behind, which are not of slight weight. Mr. Pitt had perils to contend with, which have not much concern with foreign policy, or national finance. The whole foundations of society trembled under him. The subterranean fire of the French Revolution had worked its way, in defiance of oceans and barriers, beneath the centre of our island. Here the minister showed his decision, fortitude, sagacity, management, and indefatigable industry. There had been a feebleness in Lord North's ministry, an irresolution, and vacillation, which, if he had held the reins of government at this time, would have inevitably let the country fall into the anarchy and destruction prepared for it. *Hic labor, hoc opus est!* — this must be Mr. Pitt's glory, and unfading laurel.

A British minister has perhaps more to do than human abilities can well direct. He must begin early, or he will never be a speaker, and have time enough for all the experience necessary. He must not be put at once into the highest situation, but rise

by some moderate gradations to it. He must not only be wise in council, but powerful in expression and eloquence. And all these must be built on vast, varied, and deep knowledge; for which, if he begins business early, he has little previous time. Then health must be added to these, a calm temper, and resolute spirit.

Of such rare qualities ought to be a prime minister of Great Britain. If we admit faults in Mr. Pitt, still it will be difficult to find one who has approached, or will approach, nearer to these great qualities than he. If we believe that no one would have conducted us with safety through the first dangers of the French Revolution but he, then, perhaps, we may think the results of the *Nabob of Arcot's debts* have been more beneficial than evil; but yet the ills were mighty, even to Great Britain, and last to this day. We survive; — and in the midst of thousands of great errors and crimes, society and governments still go on. Sometimes they work themselves clear by their own collisions and con-

flicts. A frightful struggle, the remote effect of some of Mr. Pitt's financial errors, has been going on for some eventful and disastrous years,—and now, perhaps, is nearly past,—but not without the ruin of tens of thousands, and the degradation and languishment of many others, besides a destruction of capital which I do not believe will be ever repaired. At the same time it is but just to say, that all these evils in this aggravated degree were not necessary consequences. Irresolute, imperfect, feeble, and erroneous remedies long aggravated the disease, when skill would soon have softened it, and more quickly have brought the only degree of cure of which it was capable. Some of its scars, and some of the latent effects of the disorder, must remain for ever.

LETTER XXXVII.

27th Aug. 1824.

My last letter will seem to many an ungracious attack on the memory of Mr. Pitt; but historical characters are fair subjects of rational and honest discussion. I was led into my observations by recasting my eyes on Burke's two famous speeches, from which I have given extracts, — especially the last. I know well how to appreciate the common exaggeration of parliamentary speeches, and with what sort of attention, and in what temper, to examine them. But the nature of Burke's speech (however mingled with splendid oratory) proves itself. The documents are given, — and the reasoning is unassailable. My own mind, therefore, could not resist the inferences which seemed to me necessarily applicable to the minister. These then combined

themselves with my own recollections of the crisis, and with all the subsequent train of events which I have observed, and which appeared to me to attach themselves to this source. I have been myself among Mr. Pitt's warm panegyrists; and have done it honestly, as I now honestly and sincerely record my censures. Neither then, nor now, have I spoken in the spirit of *party*: I hate such vulgar and senseless ebullitions: my business is to use my own eyes, and my own reason, and to speak plainly, and fearlessly. There is nothing more disgusting than the unsifted repetition of the same facts, the same conclusions, and the same views of persons and things. I will not say that history could be made as entertaining as fiction; but to parts of it, which seem to have become trite and exhausted, might be given a new character, a freshness, and liveliness of interest, which had all the effect of a new story, by genius operating on knowledge and personal observation, without departing from the sternness, integrity, and accuracy of truth. But compilation follows

compilation; and the same facts are told in the same order, and almost in the same words, followed by the same comments, till the satiated reader loathes the subject. I have endeavoured to look on annals and sketches of the late reign, even those composed by men of genius, like Dr. *Aikin*, but have found every page filled with matter as beaten as a dusty road near London. There is no adequate reason for this: an unshackled mind, full of its own resources, and spirited in its thoughts and style, might give such a history vivid and deep interest, and convey through it the most useful and extensive instruction.

I am not irrevocably wedded to these opinions of Pitt: if I am wrong, I am willing to be set right; but I will not be shut from free and honest discussion. I owe him neither favour nor disfavour. History is of no value, — nay, it is mischievous, — if its sole object be not truth. Unfounded panegyrics, and satires, and libels, all lead to popular errors, which are pregnant with evil. Pitt may be forgiven, if, carried away

by a sudden tide, he suffered himself to be lifted up into the throne of power, and took safe lodging there, though the flood sprung from polluted sources; but we must not, therefore, confound all distinctions, and make this a subject of praise.

This remark may be extended to his financial operations. He was considered, for many years, a profound financial genius. It is clear that the praise was undeserved: his schemes were borrowed. He had no merit in the *Sinking Fund* but its application; indeed that scheme itself is now considered by a large portion of economists to be unsound (though I myself am not convinced by their arguments, because I think the merit of it to go far beyond the mere sum redeemed). However, I do not hang my doubts here: a minister cannot have time to *originate* the larger portion (if any) of his schemes. My position is, that he is not to adopt the wrong; and if he adopts them, and defends them by unsound arguments, that then, though he may be forgiven, so long as better were not at that

time known, he must give up his pretensions to profound genius in the department.

Pitt's speeches are now a *caput mortuum*: they had nothing of essence, or general truth in them, except what was trite; they derived their value from the application to the topic of the moment; they were a happy rotundity of common-place, applied with great skill and judgment, and perhaps the more popular at the moment, *because* they were common-place; for a popular audience comprehended them with more facility, and then hugged themselves for their own quickness. Whereas Burke's arguments, full of subtlety, acuteness, and nice discriminations, all eminently original, could only be duly perceived, felt, and appreciated by clear, cultivated, and refined intellects. I admit, therefore, that Pitt's power was best calculated for the generality of practical business. Fox approached nearer to Burke, but not with the same fertility, the same knowledge, or the same imagination. Fox had little imagination; Pitt,

none at all; Burke, the rich imagination of the most beautiful and most sublime poet; —and I cannot hesitate to pronounce Burke the most extraordinary and most brilliant man of the eighteenth century in point of intellect. I know no writings which have such inexhaustible interest and inexhaustible instruction as Burke's.

They who love to cavil will perhaps ask, Why this perpetual reference to names already appreciated, and laid up with the past? If in truth they are already properly appreciated, and their merits duly settled, then the reference *is* idle. But I do not admit this assumption: great difference of opinion still exists as to all these characters; and I cannot think another sincere opinion of one who has lived so long as I have superfluous.

Mr. Pitt's strength lay in his decision, promptitude, and power of exposition; and he had certain bold and dignified habits of business, to which he was born, and in which he was nursed. The very name of his father always availed him; and his

father's glory descended upon his brow. We submit reluctantly to men whom we remember in low situations. But Mr. Pitt had minor faults, which operated as clouds upon him: he was totally insensible to literature; and he was reserved, except to a set of odd companions, who did not aid his popularity. He brought a great number of new families into odious power; and he had mingled and fitful ideas of aristocracy reconcileable to no principle. He often selected strange men for places of importance and dignity; and gave his confidence to persons in a manner which, as no one suspected his own simplicity and integrity of character, appeared astonishing and inexplicable. A number of vulgar creatures, marked by all sorts of corruption and rapacity, often had his ear, — were widely employed by him, — and made immense fortunes under him. He seemed to delight in men quick and expert in business, without much enquiring how far they were free from scruples, and rendered ready by exemption from the ties of nice regards. He had under his smile,

therefore, too many jobbers, contractors, and adventurers. It was the harvest of new men, — and rather of men of sharp practical habits of business, than of great talents. The most grievous thing that can happen to a country is the excess of manufacturing population above the agricultural; and yet this was the burden of Pitt's song of triumph.

So many families move in the higher ranks who owe all to Mr. Pitt, that this criticism will probably excite a resentful and malignant clamour; — and "pshaw," "illiberal," "childish," "nonsense," will be written on the margin, as I once saw scrawled upon a dozen pages of one of my novels at the circulating library of a sea-bathing place, to which Thames-Street and Bond-Street empty themselves in the autumn, to be purified by the searching waves of the ocean.

LETTER XXXVIII.

28th Aug. 1824.

WHATEVER may be pretended, *vox populi vox Dei* is the prevailing conviction or feeling of men's minds. I can perceive persons of some strength of understanding, and some elevation above the vulgar, struggling to conceal from others, and even from themselves, this involuntary submission, yet unable to escape from it. They have fitful emancipations; but the spell returns upon them; and it requires a great effort to think even for a moment contrary to the public. I am aware that, when respect is paid by them to one in popular favour, the respect may be either two-fold, that is, partly to the power derived from the possession of public praise, as well as to the persuasion of the merit, or it may be to the first only, when there is no concurrence in the second.

One or other of these they cannot resist; but it is only in particular humours, and when they are pleased, that they can acknowledge the powers or worth of those on whom the public voice has not set its stamp.

But on sober and impartial examination, is the public opinion always right, or generally right? Or is it probable that it should be? In matters of taste, if they judge for themselves, it may be asserted that it is impossible that they should be right; and surely it is equally so in matters of reason. If they do not judge for themselves, it depends upon the chance of the leaders whom they adopt. But of all painful things, the dependence upon caprice is one of the most painful; it is literally a dependence upon a building of sand. I always, therefore, wish as much as possible to avoid all concern with all questions, which are what in the vulgar sense are called "matters of taste;" that is, matters of wanton opinion, not grounded on any reason, but merely taken up by

whim, whether it be individual, or the echo of the public cry.

Of all parts of literature, poetry is commonly deemed to be most a *matter of taste*, in this vulgar sense. But I shall always contend that poetry can be defined, and ascertained, and judged of, with almost as much precision as a mathematical problem. If every individual is justified in judging of poetry, as he will, on the pretence that it is a matter of taste, then the great poet is indeed in the power of evil witches, who can make the winds blow which way they will. I do not believe that any one ever wrote noble poetry who was not anxious to be well thought of, approved, and admired by just and adequate judges, and, perhaps, who was not even more anxious than his reason would ratify. A genius may continue to write in defiance of censure and obloquy, — but not if his confidence in his own power and rectitude can be shaken; yet it *will* be shaken, so long as there is licence for the operation of whimsical taste.

I labour, therefore, perpetually, and with all my might, to bring poetry out of this besetting and dangerous maze, and to endeavour to familiarise the tests by which it may be measured with precision and certainty. The application of these tests will always be a shield to the injured against the unjust and insulting decisions of the heartless and cruel mob. If the words *imagination* or *invention*, *sublimity*, *pathos*, *beauty*, and *truth*, can be precisely defined, and the definitions be accurately applied, then there can be no question what is poetry, or what are its gradations of excellence. Nothing which is in a state of uncertainty can give satisfaction: to live like a weathercock, at the mercy of every blast or breeze that blows, is excessive irritation and consuming fever.

He who has a positive rule of judgment, a regular measure of value to resort to, clears up provoking doubts in an instant, and thus cuts short ignorant and unprincipled controversies. But the *arbitrium*

popularis auræ is the most insufferable of all tyrannies.

It is the same in all the other departments of the mind as in poetry. The mob will judge of qualities by caprice, which is more likely to be wrong than right. But men highly endowed must not suffer themselves thus to be cast down, nor be "damned by the faint," though well-meaning "praises" of their feeble-minded, breeze-led friends. It is unreasonable to expect them to be above what the *vox populi* dictates, — and they never will be above it. He who has not the public with him will not have friends sincerely with him: he must be every thing to himself. I dare say that Milton had not a friend in his own day who thought him equal to Cowley, or even to Waller; and that he looked down upon them, when such opinions were unguardedly let out, not perhaps directly, but by inference from the tone of their conversations, with calm but pitying complacence.

A man cannot have great abilities, and be ignorant of them: every one is conscious

of his own powers. But it may be said, that many suppose themselves to have them who have them not. But these, when attacked, have not the same refuge in a test of precise measure: when they flatter themselves that it is caprice which attacks them, they cannot resort to a fixed rule which shall set them at ease.

An author cannot be ignorant how much of the stores he uses is original, and how far it is necessary to rely on the aid of others; nor can he be ignorant of the degree of his own facility, or how far his power of mastery extends over the thoughts, sentiments, and images of others. He knows exactly how far he understands himself, and what is the degree and force of his own conviction; he knows whether, and how far, he can go beyond the predecessor on whom he is building, and how he can ascertain his strength or his weakness. If he can grapple with the powerful, and rise superior to them, he must be powerful himself. All these are unequivocal tests; there are others, which are much more

uncertain and misleading. These are, where the authors have relied on artificial and factitious merits. These may, by chance, have been resorted to by men of talents and genius; but they will not stand the test, though they may exhibit doubtful and even plausible pretensions. Such authors, then, cannot rescue themselves from the power and tyranny of popular caprice. What is factitious may always be performed without much talent; and, therefore, affords no satisfactory proof of intrinsic eminence. Without the concurrence, then, of popular approbation, it is empty; its value lies in its attraction; and if it does not attract, it is nothing.

Yet the chances of winning popular applause are at first strongly in favour of what is factitious. It is much more easy to give it novelty; and novelty is the grand charm to the mob. Almost all can tell what is new; very few can tell what is profound and just. There are always so many runners, also, and so many critics, in favour of the artificial; and the authors, also, who have

an artificial turn of mind are men of intrigue and manœuvre, and capable of using all technical means of spreading their own fame.

But all these things are hollow: such authors must sit, and walk, and sleep with a mine under them. What has been gained by artifice and manœuvre may be lost by artifice and manœuvre. Trickery is open to all; and very common abilities are qualified to reach it. A new idol is likely to be set up every day in right of the very principle by which the present possessor himself obtained his elevation; the casting down, therefore, is the inevitable consequence of the raising up.

I would not hold fame by such a tenure, even if the utmost celebrity which was ever conferred was bestowed upon me. The pain of being cast down is a thousand times more intense than the delight of being raised up; and there is no internal resource, no solace of self-complacence and conscious worth; all has been bent to public opinion;

and with the loss of public opinion all ceases.

But he who has gone right onward, pursuing the principles of truth, and positive and intrinsic strength, feels calm and easy, because he feels that what he has gained he cannot lose; because he knows his own place; because he knows himself impenetrable to casual breezes, and fitful blasts, and fickle clouds, and sunshine moodily intermixed; because he relies upon the ore of standard value, which is the same at all times, and in all countries. He is like a man of solid property surrounded by a set of gorgeous moonshine fortunes: he says, "I know that the nominal amount "of my wealth is not a tenth part of that "of yours; but of mine the nominal value "does not exceed the real value; — but "yours is not only not worth its nominal "value, but will one day burst, and be "worth nothing."

There is no mystery in the mental faculties of mankind: fancy, imagination, sentiment, passion, acuteness, judgment, reason,

memory, are all positive, and capable of being discriminated and measured: they are not to be admitted, or denied, as temper or fashion may dictate. They do not depend on a little more or less of management; or a little more or less of care or chicanery. Genius and talent pervade all in spite of negligence, rapidity, and defying artlessness; and deficiency will pervade all in spite of *finesse*, and labour, and contrivance, and false ornament.

LETTER XXXIX.

29th Aug. 1824.

PERHAPS we cannot subject ourselves to too severe a self-examination without incurring a tendency to despondence; and despondence oppresses and injures the very spring of action. The desire to be of importance in society is implanted in us by Providence, probably to excite our virtuous exertions. Few can really be of importance; and the majority are driven to betake themselves to by-ways in the vain pursuit of it. It is not, however, by neglecting human concerns, and assuming that we are brought into the world to have nothing to do with it, that we can perform our part. We must use human means, and mix ourselves with human pleasures and duties; but for the purposes of true glory they must be of the most elevated and virtuous kind.

To improve one's own intellectual faculties by daily and intense exertion, and then to communicate the light thus attained to others, is surely not merely an innocent but a noble employment of life. There are social duties of which this may lead to the neglect; but no one can do every thing. All that we do for the public we may hope will in some way be returned back on us and our posterity. He who carves for himself, may justly be left to himself. But anxiety is the lot even of those who merit most, and put forth all their strenuous and undamped endeavours to deserve an unmercenary, generous, and self-devoted fame. Some doubts, perhaps, are continually rising as to their own aptitude for the line of ambition in which they have embarked, because they feel that the will without the power is not sufficient to justify them in leaving ordinary paths.

The firmest mind will sometimes relax a little, and be somewhat affected by the strong tide of popular opinion. He who is told that his toils are emptiness, and his

dreams of inspiration nothing but idle vapours, will now and then, in gloomy fits, suspect himself of trifling, even though he has tasked himself at other times to the strictest scrutiny of principles, and the strictest tests of rectitude. The splendours of intellect are supposed by many, perhaps by the majority of mankind, not to be its most useful parts; but this is a narrow view. The productions of grand and sound imagination are at least as useful as those of what are called the exact sciences. The test lies in their being genuine, in their not being borrowed, and in their being embodiments of sublime, pathetic, or beautiful truths.

It is not given to many to be original, or at least succesfully original. Millions can make themselves masters of the deepest knowledge, and noblest thoughts, and images of others; and many will then persuade themselves, if they can a little vary the expressions, that they are their own. There is nothing new in the generality of books, except facts, of which the novelty is

the mere result of the course of time; not only nothing which has not been said before, but nothing which springs strictly from the author's own mind. In addition to native genius, it requires long practice, before an author will venture to write freely, and fearlessly, from his own thoughts; at least he will not do so at the commencement of his career, but partially, and by fits. I have searched all my life for originality in literature; and every day I am more and more convinced how very rare it is.

With regard to its usefulness, it requires such nice faculties to appreciate it duly, that we must not wonder that it often misses the popular approbation. What is more ambitious and gaudy often strikes more at first, and withdraws the public notice from it. But what is borrowed is only an impertinent intrusion; and whatever gives it the appearance without the reality of novelty is a mischievous deceit; it robs us of our time to lead to nothing; and irritates by a hope of information which it disappoints. It is true that the

greater part of publications do not profess to be original: they are works of learning, or compilations which are of minor use, and always liable to be superseded by later labours of the same kind. There is in a late age of literature an incredible quantity of mechanical authorship, which requires no talent nor even learning, but has the very injurious effect of bringing literature itself into contempt. The name of author has on this account now lost all respect and weight; and is shorn of those honours which are necessary to protect its many difficulties and privations from the insults and oppressions of the vulgar.

We know that in the time of Pope there were swarms of Grub-Street writers, whose memories are exposed in the *Dunciad*; but such writers are now increased twenty-fold, and, probably, yet far more malignant in heart, and mean in degree. All contribute to make authorship a fearful, and sometimes a despairing occupation. There is a spirit within us, which, in spite of all these things, urges us on, through clouds,

storms, and darkness. We are opposed or disgusted at every step; but our fate bids us persevere. We have learned in better times what were the duties of intellectual ambition: our lot is cast; our faculties are bent to one end; we must employ ourselves according to our destiny, or sit in gloomy and overwhelming idleness.

The fashion of modern times is to take part with the populace in matters of taste. Authorship is become so very lucrative a trade with those who can please the populace, that the desire to please them in every way is a natural and even necessary result of it. It is now, therefore, that the popular judgment is the true standard. Favourite authors write for money, and not for celebrity, and only regard celebrity as the means. Great genius may be popular; but then it is often obliged to make many condescensions and compliances to be so; — not, indeed, always; — Lord Byron was popular in defiance of the public.

The immense variety of responsibilities which some strait and severe moralists

would put upon us, would make life a burden of care and dread not to be endured. They would make it not sufficient to pursue innocent and virtuous occupations; but all sorts of active services must be also performed, and those both most discordant with the main pursuit and in themselves of the most opposite kinds. It is something not to do ill; it is more to do good: but who can do all good? On this point we may refer to the remarks made by Mr. Temple, of St. Gluvias, in his character of Gray, inserted in Mason's Life of that poet (of which, however, I protest against one or two of the sentences).

But the difficulty often lies in the choice of powers: he who makes sacrifices for that for which he has no capacity abandons the path of his duty. We know when we have the powers, but we cannot be always sure when we have them not; and a man may be forgiven who amuses himself innocently, even though he may be guilty of some faults of omission, which it would have

been more virtuous not to have been answerable for.

Fame has been easily gained by some; while others have laboured hard, have had strong claims, and have never attained it. It is this uncertainty, perhaps, which keeps hope alive among the feebly qualified, and which tends by its *palpable* injustice to console the strongly qualified who are unsuccessful. But if it does shake the self-opinion of these last, the evil does not end with the loss of distinction; it gangrenes in a susceptible and conscientious mind, by making it fearful of having misapplied its talents and its duties.

Great talents and great genius are sometimes very long before they display themselves to the world in such unequivocal shapes, that their existence can no more be denied or doubted. But the intrinsic consciousness of the possessor supports him under coldness or neglect. Sometimes he does not gain his powers of expression till late, and sometimes is slow in acquiring due courage. At length, when he becomes

irresistible, all pretend to have always foreseen his eminence. This extraordinary force of faculties, however, is but very sparingly bestowed. The generality, even among the learned and the eminent, are mainly the creatures of culture and art. If it is only by nature that great brilliance is reached, and wonderful quickness and depth of penetration exhibited, there is a degree of moderate superiority and common usefulness which is produced by industry and discipline, operating upon good, but not rare, abilities. Superficial, or dull, or blundering judgments confound these with genius, and then conclude that all eminence is nothing but mere acquisition. There is nothing of the works of these secondary persons which cannot be traced to its source, and of which the process of production cannot be shown; whereas of genius the sources and the channels are both invisible, and the means of creation beyond the trace of other minds. Genius works by impulses; and catches lights, of which it knows not itself whence they come.

LETTER XL.

30th Aug. 1824.

I AM arrived at my *fortieth* letter since the 15th of July (or rather, if I include my *Letters on Lord Byron*, at my *eighty-first* since the 22d of May). This is an uninterrupted industry which I never achieved before, and am not at all likely to achieve again. The instant that necessity obliges me to intermix myself with practical business the spell is gone. My temper and frame are too anxious and too irritable for such services: for nothing is more assuredly true, to persons of observation, and sagacious sense, and knowledge of the world, than that the primary essential of skill and success in business is *sang-froid*, reserve, and seeming command of temper. Nothing must be combated warmly; every thing that is meant to be resisted must be seemingly conceded; and then the cunning conceder must wind round again imperceptibly

to his point, and appearing to yield every thing, must not really yield even a particle. This is a mode of self-management which is as impossible to me, as it would be to command the winds. My countenance would betray me, if my words did not; I *must* say and even *look* what I think: I cannot suppress my instantaneous and violent risings of heart, at every veiled artifice which I perceive; every subterfuge; every attempted concealment of opinion and purpose; and every insidious perversion of fact announced with pretensions to candour and frankness. Common business is but the conflict of, or with, shufflers and gamblers who play with loaded dice.

Neither nature nor habits have fitted me for these things. I am only fit for the calm of domestic society; for solitude, musing, reading, writing, and a short and quiet stroll in the open air. If these are proofs of want of talent, or of inutility to life, I must submit. In the course of my life, I have been drawn at times a good deal into the vortex of business; but I have been as

constantly its victim, as I have been engaged in it: the most stupid fellow always beat me; — and he beat me perhaps more easily in proportion to his stupidity: the sharp edge of my temper was always blunted, or turned back upon me, by his callousness.

I wish it had been my fate never to have mingled with the world; to have lived retired even in the most humble competence, where my passions could have been saved from irritation; where my pride could have been kept in calmness; and those daily and insulting mortifications, which I exert my most strenuous endeavours to raise myself above, but which either madden me, or sink me into despondence, could never have reached me. I now feel the irreversible conviction that I was not made for the bustle of society; and that every year I passed in it was but a new entanglement of chains galling at the moment, and leaving incurable wounds. The utmost we can hope is peace; and where is peace to be found but in seclusion from the passions

and intrigues of mankind; in lonely contemplation; and in air and exercise, to soothe the body and produce those deep slumbers which are so much better than life? One day of complacent and noble imagination is worth a year of the best pleasures of reality!

Nothing in reality ever satisfies me,—or at least nothing which I find in society. All mankind seem mainly employed in mortifying, or deceiving, or robbing each other; and though they praise fantastic and charlatanic genius, pure and unsophisticated genius is the very prime object of their persecution. If I could do nothing but read a few of the very first poets, Latin, Italian, or English, and write uninterruptedly all the rest of the day, without encountering the prattle, the degrading gossip, the coldness, the frowns of the busy people, who go about like evil spirits to destroy human happiness, I think I yet could recover my peace and self-complacence; and pass perhaps a few hoary years in integrity of mind. But almost all my

unbroken and unmercenary exertions have been turned to poison; and almost all my ardent love of literature has brought but slights, cavils, and perversions.

That it is difficult to persuade persons off business that there is any value in literature ought to excite no wonder. These persons must necessarily hate it, or despise it. It is either in their way, or it is turned in their favour to be made a victim to their duperies; and mankind naturally despise the victims of their own cunning, as they naturally hate what crosses them. But in defiance of these opinions, literature is to life something far beyond mere ornament. England is not as it has been; but still England must have a number of independent minds at leisure to pursue speculative truth; and to exalt our being by intellectual refinement and strength. This can only be done by those liberal and detached persons who are utterly loose from the pursuits of money or ambition. All self-interested occupations blind the eyes and the heart to truth and wisdom.

LETTER XLI.

31st Aug. 1824.

One advantage of good books is this, that we learn men's thoughts free from any of the irritations of superiority: for to learn, is to own a mastery in him who teaches. Yet to compare, is not to be taught; — it may be a mere desire of concurrence: where we doubt the rectitude of our feelings, or our own conclusions, the consentaneousness of others is very satisfactory. Of verbal opinions we soon forget the import, or at least the nicety of tints; but what is written may always be referred to.

Men also write with more calmness and consideration than they talk: they would venture in conversation a thousand things which they would not hazard on paper; and of which, if they commenced to put it on paper, they would instantly see the fallacy.

This must be understood as spoken of original authors; for what is borrowed or compiled may be either done with no judgment, or if done with judgment, should be sought only at the fountain-head. Common authorship may be executed by no other faculty than common apprehension aided by memory; and compilation may be done mechanically, even without memory. If we watch these two classes, we shall frequently experience a painfully-degraded sense of literature, either from their deficiency of force of mind or their ignorance.

I have seen able men, and even men of genius, without fixed opinions and sentiments; but such are never primary men. The highest object of intellectual powers is wisdom; and no one can be wise, who has not come to clear and steady conclusions. But there are also certain intuitive convictions in which all virtuous hearts concur: without these, genius is but a false blaze. The gladiatorial brilliance of the understanding is but unsatisfactory, and even irritating,

without that confirmatory colouring of the heart which is an essential charm of true genius. A mere practical understanding judges only of what is expedient in a particular case: wisdom is general and unchangeable; and its thoughts are ratified by the sincerity of feeling. With what anxiety we search in the memorials, writings, and confidential relics of illustrious men for these results of compound and comprehensive mind! A rich intellect continues to mature such fruit to the last; and whenever the letters and papers of the truly eminent have been preserved, they are full of them. Gray's letters are full of them; Cowley's essays are full of them; Mrs. Carter's letters are full of them;—they abound even in letters of state, such as those of Sir Henry Sydney, the father of Sir Philip, and of the noble Algernon Sydney, his descendant. They are exuberant in Petrarch's voluminous correspondence (from which it would be well to give a judicious selection, for the whole are too tedious for modern idleness); they are to

be seen in fragments of Dante; and even Burns and Kirke White have many delightful specimens of them. What is strange, they may be found even in letters of Sir Robert Cecil, (Salisbury,) King James's crafty and crooked minister.

Wherever the heart speaks, *there* is always eloquence, interest, and instruction. He who in his blind pride takes the port of being above human weaknesses, disgusts us with his cold and unnatural pretensions. A sense of feebleness, of a want of the sympathy of others, and of the sorrows and regrets of our frail mortal condition, melts every refined and virtuous reader, and attaches him to such effusions. Hence we often learn of how little value are fame, power, and riches.

Nothing which is the effect of any single power of the mind exclusively exercised can be great and of profound importance. All that is magnificent in intellectual fruit springs from the joint operation of all the faculties in grand and due proportions.

Judgment is as necessary as imagination, and fancy, and depth of feeling; but it can do nothing without rich and extensive materials to work upon; therefore it is of little use by itself. All array of materials without the controul of judgment, which crowns the whole, is but chaotic ostentation, or, at best, a delusive light. The end of all is solid, accurate, and guiding knowledge; a proper estimate of the purposes of our being, and of the means of such qualified happiness as the condition of humanity will allow.

I have learned the conviction, that whatever loads the memory without informing the understanding is but a mischievous incumbrance. But whatever fills the imagination with sound and probable images can never be useless; even though he, who creates them, deduces from them no consequences addressed to the understanding.

Common books seem to be written to put false lights upon things, and to give a plausible gloss, which all persons of sense

know to have no base. Nothing delights more than a sound, calm, and sincere discrimination, and a rejection of every thing of hollow ornament, and specious ambition, and pomposity.

LETTER XLII.

1st Sept. 1824.

POSITIVE illness has not often interrupted me in these letters, — but it has come upon me yesterday and to-day. My hand trembles, and I cannot make distinct syllables but slowly and with difficulty. A burning fever has been upon all my frame for six-and-thirty hours: it is a little abated; and I return to my task, lest the spell should be broken.

Sometimes I question the wisdom of the abandonment and devotion with which I have pursued literature; but much more often the want of regularity and of system in which I have indulged myself. Method and discipline are almost as necessary as native endowment; and scattered powers are not likely to throw permanent light. Then, as to self-examination, almost all the

pleasure lies in progressive advance. But I, unfortunately, have followed every flitting shadow as it glanced by me; exhausted myself with all, yet reached none.

Regret, perhaps, is natural to all sensitive minds; no one thinks he has done so well as he might have done. It is easy to see errors when they are past, — because the mist which passion raised round them at the moment has then vanished; and there is often a still surer mode by which they are seen, — suffering experience! Wise books would teach us by anticipation what experience teaches; but we only believe them in confirmation of experience, — not in lieu of it. It is strange, but so it is, that we are more fond of *reflective* than of *prospective* wisdom. Many read in old age to aid their memory and assist the digestion of their observations; but they who read young, with a view to the future, are, if they have read effectually, apt in old age to live upon their own stores.

The memory of one who does *not* think for himself is much more likely to be good

than the memory of one who does; because an active and stirring mind always alters, and goes far to efface the exactness of an impression received; and an original mind which lives upon its own stores does not live on the recollection of former thoughts, but on its present creations. What the mere memory supplies seldom does more than "play round the head," and scarcely ever penetrates to the bosom.

Men who pride themselves upon what they call solid and severe reason can scarcely do without some little portion of fancy; but they admit neither imagination nor sentiment. Yet without these, what is literature? Dry and barren as the rock which has neither springs, nor verdure, nor foliage. Imagination may, in some degree, follow the impulse of effort; sentiment cannot: if it be factitious, it is not sentiment: the heart makes responses only where nature prompts.

The technical details of particular subjects; the peculiarities appropriate only to one or other of the artificial classes of life;

whatever does not interest the general conditions of our being; — are beneath the dignity of general and high literature, which ought to deal in essences and principles. Few authors can aspire to this eminent rank which demands so many powerful and pure faculties of intellect; in which labour alone can make such imperfect advances; and which only strong native genius can treat with any success. Of what is general the interest is more durable, but not so immediate. There is a vulgar saying, that *what is every body's business is nobody's business:* it is so in what is of general concern in literature:—pressing, particular, and temporary interests only are intense.

LETTER XLIII.

2d Sept. 1824.

My headach continues, but my task must not be abandoned. The mind, however, is at the mercy of this frail material tenement, and can work but imperfectly when the frame is deranged. The instant the intellect becomes clouded, a feeling of degradation falls upon the sensitive spirit.

Self-confidence operates very differently on different tempers: in some it produces arrogance; others it makes complacent, gentle, kind, and candid. But how various are the sources whence self-confidence springs? In some it is a tender, fragile plant, nipped and broken by every breath of wind. This morbid susceptibility of rudeness is very unfortunate; for we do not live in a calm and genial atmosphere, unexposed to perpetual blights, storms, and

fierce attacks. To me, if a warm and cheering sunshine comes for a few days, a blast is gathering behind, which has a double effect on the glow to which it succeeds. It is better not to be roused out of one's gloom, than to be awakened that one may sink back again with a new sense of its oppression.

There are some men who are unaccountably destined by fate to be misused, and treated with harshness; men, for whom no merits can win the public favour, and who labour incessantly without reward, and without notice. Poor *Bysshe Shelley* could obtain no fame, no praise, and scarcely the smallest attention in his life; and now that he is gone, since

"No flattery soothes the dull cold ear of death,"

he is put forth as an extraordinary genius, with powers of poetry peculiar to himself! Of such stuff is the world made: its heartless censures, and heartless praises, are alike ill-timed and disgusting. It is madness to

love fame, except with great sobriety and controul of reason, even though it is "the "spur that raises the spirit to energetic toils, "and the scorn of all idle indulgences."

So long as men have no honesty in the formation of their opinions or judgments, and no sincerity in the expression of them, fame is the gift of caprice or interest; and the placid and "even tenor of a noiseless "way" is far preferable to the condition of those who enter into the feverish course of a race for it. There are times when every thing appears "stale and profitless;" and then we only want that for which no sacrifice has been incurred; for which nothing has been paid. On these occasions I sometimes resolve to have no more concern with literature or the world; but to shut myself up, and eke out the little remnant of my days with the lightest of those innocent amusements which require no thought, and excite no strong emotion.

The world loves the gay and the frolicsome, the lively and witty, because it hates all serious affections, and deep anxieties:

over whatever it can ridicule it thinks that it has gained a superiority; and I cannot help believing that envy and love of degradation are the ruling passions of mankind. They are fond of setting up those whom they know that they can pull down again when they will; but they do not like to set up real strength. There is almost always something sinister and interested in popular panegyric.

And now I have dwelt long enough on abstract opinions and sentiments, and will endeavour to relieve myself, by returning a little to facts; for my mind is not at present clear enough for what is subtle and profound. In the house where I was born, the family of DIGGES, *Leonard* and *Thomas*, two learned mathematicians, whose lives are to be found in the *Biographia Britannica*, (father and grandfather of Sir Dudley Digges,) resided, as owners, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. They were of a very ancient family, allied to the Sackvilles, St. Legers, and Nevilles. Thomas sold it; and his son became possessed of Chilham

Castle. Sir Dudley made a figure in the struggles against Charles I. for civil liberty, as may be seen in Lord Clarendon's History. This family of Digges expired a few years ago in *West Digges*, the comedian, whose father had sold Chilham Castle to the Colebrookes (after which it passed by sale to the Herons; and now to Mr. Wildman, whose cousin bought *Newstead* of Lord Byron). After my grandfather's early death in July, 1712, the old Gothic parts of Wootton were pulled down; (I remember the fragments of the stone mullions, and the trefoil spandrils of the windows, lying about;) and during the infancy of my uncle and father, this retired old wood-covered mansion became much dilapidated. It stood on a high hill, absolutely embosomed in ancient oaks, and elms, and ashes, which were of the growth of many centuries. The scenery around had many picturesque beauties; and the sea, Dover Castle, and the French coast, could be seen from many of the neighbouring eminences. My father had been a severe

student in his youth; was a severe reasoner; and prided himself in the cultivation of his judgment, rather than his imagination. He was a man of extraordinary muscular strength; but after twenty years of excruciating pain, fell a victim to the stone, on the verge of 69. In literature, the book which I remember that he most pressed me to study, was *Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity*.

LETTER XLIV.

3d Sept. 1824.

I HAD not strength yesterday to close my little narrative; and the interval will render it difficult for me to renew the train. I cannot say that I had ever the perseverance to read much of *Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity;* though I delighted to hang over *the life* of that learned man, in the *naïve* and amusing pages of old Isaac Walton; and never passed in view his rectory-house of Bishop's Bourne, which lay on the side of our road to Canterbury, or crossed the adjoining downs, where he fed his sheep, under the dominion of his termagant wife, without venerating the abode, and awakening in my imagination the form of this very eminent and virtuous author, seated on a mound of turf, and deeply meditating in the simplicity of his grandeur. In the church is his

monument, erected by his neighbour and friend, Sir *W. Cowper*, ancestor of the poet of *The Task*. The wicked widow of this meek man took another husband immediately on his death; and I discovered the record of the marriage many years ago, in the parish-register of Bishop's Bourne. I think the name was *Nethersole*: but I believe I sent a copy of the entry about 1796 to the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

What an intensity of thoughts, and incidents, and sufferings, has my being experienced, since the days of unsuspecting boyhood, when I used to fill my mind with the story of *Richard Hooker!* I have accidentally turned my eyes this morning on a memorandum of part of a letter written by me to a friend, on the 20th July, 1822,—a year of a most afflicting domestic fortune; and I cannot refrain from introducing some extracts from it here.

"My deep and ever-renewing misfortunes, "which follow each other in unbroken and "endless succession, impair my faculties, "and leave nothing but *occasional* flashes

" of light. Sometimes, indeed, there is a " calmness even in despair, an immove- " able steadiness and defiance to all ordi- " nary impulses, which has something of " terrific luxury! Even in disappointments, " which are comparatively paltry, in the " neglect by the public of those literary " productions by which I had hoped to " please it, I derive a stern, defying com- " fort from my failure of success," &c. " I look back on —— with a satisfaction " which the world's coldness to it in no " degree effaces. I glory in having left a " record of many of the sentiments to " be found, especially in the —— volume, " and flatter myself that many deep com- " plications of interest and feeling are there " elicited, which have never before been " put on paper," &c.

" It may be observed, that it is a strange " thing to concern myself at all about the " trifles of literature, while interests and " evils, so much more intimate and pressing, " are attacking me on every side. These " very evils are what make the relief of

" literature more urgent and medicinal. I
" could no more have borne an hundredth
" part of the woes and dangers that have
" oppressed and gathered upon me for
" thirty years, without the inspiring aid of
" literature, than a feather can bear a
" heavy stone. Literature to me has been
" like the buoyant wave, that lifts upon its
" bosom the terrific vessel of war, though
" loaded with a weight above numeration,
" and filled with all the instruments of
" slaughterous death and ruin! The gi-
" gantic combination of moving destruction
" cuts through the foaming billow; dyeing
" its brilliant colours with stench, and
" defiling its purity with human morbid-
" ness; but the frightful furrow it has
" made soon closes again: it lashes itself
" into its former freshness; and it throws
" again its white untainted spray to heaven,
" as if the demon of evil had never crossed
" it!"

There is not a more common charge against men of habits and pursuits such as I have cultivated, than that of affected melancholy.

It is a charge of a foolish and contemptible affectation, which, if it were true, would justly depress the party charged. But the charge is an offence still more odious in those who make it, when it is false: — it is grossly false, when made against *me!* I cannot tell the number and succession of stupendous sorrows and misfortunes, which I have had to endure: the narrative would mainly consist of private details, which all delicacy to individuals forbids: but because it would be contrary to all good judgment and taste to specify them, it would be grossly unjust to call the truth of them in question. It is a duty, not to brood upon our afflictions too long; and he who is naturally disposed to thought, has no remedy but in the diversions of literature. It is true, that when the mind is enfeebled with anxiety and grief, it can neither compose, study, nor think with all its energy and command of effect: but still it may do much by daily struggle and persevering toil. Long before I commenced, on the 22d of May, the series of letters which preceded

the present, I accustomed myself daily to register my thoughts, and since the 1st of January, 1823, I have filled *three folio MS. volumes* with them. Many of these, indeed, have been since transferred into my *Gnomica*, (printed at Geneva, 1824,) but large portions still remain. A great part of them turn upon criticism, especially poetical criticism, and may, perhaps, be thought to approach too near to what I have said in the way of exposition of principles in my *Letters on Lord Byron*, to be endured by the public, without incurring the charge of tautology. To me they are satisfactory, because they prove the steadiness and identity of my opinions at different times, and in different humours; for it is not my habit to repeat, but to reproduce. I am entitled to use the MSS. of my own composition; and will, therefore, make an extract or two here, for the purpose of reimpressing opinions, which I am always anxious to have familiarly understood; though in general I do not choose to copy even from myself; nor to make these

letters a patch-work of fragments composed at different periods; but to have them all of a piece, parts of one web, written consecutively, and in a natural train of associations. Such they have been hitherto; nowhere made up of prepared portions, artificially, and perhaps incongruously, joined in; all suggestions of the moment, as well as the language of the moment; but the fruits of a mind which had long exercised itself in meditating on the topics which it treated, and which was, therefore, likely to come habitually to the same conclusions as it had formerly come to.

I give a few passages from a long paper on *Poetical Invention*, written the 11th of April last.

"The powers of *invention* ought to be "under the direction of knowledge and "sagacious observation. They ought to "be prompted by a generous and glowing "enthusiasm; by an ardent love of all that "is magnificent, and all that is affecting in "nature; by a delight in the beauties of

" the material globe, and a rapturous ad-
" miration of moral excellence in man.

" All the ideas and feelings thus col-
" lected it is the business of inventive
" genius to combine and put into action.
" But if there be not this warmth, this
" infusion of an elevated, fervid, passionate,
" and enlightened spirit, the production
" cannot possess either the real charm or
" real usefulness of poetry."

" It is not by fantastic inventions; by
" elaborate and far-fetched associations;
" by peculiar, perverse, and exclusive
" habits of thought and conduct; by a
" defiance to human sympathies; by the
" portrait of unsocial experiences, and of
" the lonely amusements of one who has
" severed himself from the conflicting
" interests of man, acting upon the theatre
" of life, that the noblest emotions are to
" be raised, or the powers of inventive
" genius are most exerted. He who
" passes his time in solitude ought to turn
" it to the account of society. It is not so

" much *experiences* as *imaginations* which
" are the concern of the poet.

" We may question poetical inventions,
" by asking, Is there in them that flow of
" feeling, and rapidity of movement, which
" are characteristic of true genius? Do
" the incidents and passions meet our in-
" stantaneous sympathy? Do they accord
" with our sober reflection, and the mo-
" ments in which our judgment presides?
" Are we electrified, or melted by them?
" Do they give light to our understandings,
" and clear our views of life? If they do
" not do these things, they do not do what
" high imagination ought to do.

" When the imagination is natively rich
" and overflowing; when it has been sedu-
" lously cultivated, and applied to im-
" portant subjects, under the direction of
" judgment and good sense, it does not
" have recourse to petty substitutes to
" awaken attention." The human mind,
" when it is highly endowed with this
" imaginative faculty, is capable of repre-
" senting to itself, when in solitude, and

" *without experience*, those grand emotions " and conflicts which may take place on " the great theatre of the world, among " characters of exalted intellects and hearts, " in a polished and enlightened age.

" To this faculty, thus exercised, must " be ascribed the mighty creations of " SHAKSPEARE. That inspired bard could " know nothing of such scenes from his " own experience and observation; the " whole must have been presented to him " by his splendid, native, and just imagin- " ation. He probably had never occasion " to study what he should fill up his " dialogues with. When the character had " presented itself to his mind, the circum- " stances in which it was placed always sug- " gested to him, with admirable fidelity, the " course of emotions, sentiments, reflections; " and opinions appropriate to the occasion. " He had no search or choice to make: " the proper suite of ideas held absolute " dominion over his mind, at the juncture, " and so long farther as the spiritual pre- " sence of the characters was before him."

"If this theory be true, the accidental "position which an author holds in life "will not account for any deficiency of "interest in the matter or colouring of his "pictures.

"Constraint, research, anxiety, minute "desire of accuracy, fear of criticism, am- "bition to be splendid, all check that "freedom and fire which are the primary "characteristics of true genius. Shaks- "peare's exemption from the influence of "such checks probably gave a still more "lively and natural vent to the richness "and abundance of his mind. The absence "of these checks is perhaps beneficial *only* "where the genius is genuine, prolific, and "vigorous.

"There are certain inferior degrees of "excellence attainable by minor abilities "exerted with great labour; but they are "always less certain, less simple, less "general; of a lower tone, and of a "narrower aim. They are often false in "their colouring, and erroneous in the "conclusions they are intended to establish.

" As the truth does not *blaze* upon them,
" but is only unveiled by gradual toil,
" they see things imperfectly, partially, and
" in detached lights. Whatever characters
" and stories are founded on false sup-
" positions, and are calculated to raise false
" inferences, want an essential ingredient
" of the first order of poetry; for they
" want truth. They can convey no in-
" struction to those who seek wisdom or
" virtue; on the contrary, they tend to
" bewilder and mislead the understanding,
" and the heart. The sound judgment
" turns from them, because it seeks wisdom,
" and not delusion; it does not want to be
" encouraged in submission to the magic
" of deceitful hues; it requires the under-
" standing to be satisfied, while the fancy
" is delighted; it demands that imagination
" should be the lamp, which throws a blaze
" round the shrine of *truth*; not that it
" should decorate with factitious splendour
" the altar of *error*.

" A just and magnificent imagination
" embodies abstract wisdom, and shows it

" palpably through the mind, to the senses,
" in all its forms and workings. It deline-
" ates the passions in all their glow; and
" excites the most purifying and exalting
" sympathy for those which are noble;
" and the most salutary horror for those
" which are wicked, and mischievous, and
" cruel. It brings these pictures home to
" the closet; to the calmness of solitude,
" and the leisure of contemplation."

LETTER XLV.

4th Sept. 1824.

THERE is nothing which I admire, or ever have admired, more in the character of Lord Byron, than the spirit with which he resisted aggression, and the manner in which his strength rose in proportion as there was an attempt to debase or insult him. I myself fall prostrate at first before a rude attack; though I recover in time, even with a fierce and firm, but slow-sprung, rebound. He who shows himself susceptible and sensitive will be overwhelmed with the most wanton and cruel blows. The grand passion of mankind is the desire to mortify and abase: I have said this in a former letter; — every day brings me new instances of it.

No author can proceed a day with any consistence or complacency, who is not

hardened and indifferent to the caprices and contradictions of pretended public opinion. A thousand paltry passions operate in a thousand ways to drive their poisoned arrows in every direction; and the poor author is pierced every where through the heart and limbs, like a condemned soldier who stands the discharge of a file of muskets. According to these conflicting attacks, nothing is safe; and there are no fixed principles which constitute invariable standards of merit.

But there is a nameless grace in every thing which flows from true genius; an attraction of which we feel the full force, even when we can in no degree analyse it; and which will retain its full power long after cavils and criticisms are entirely forgotten. To talk of artifice and technical skill as conferring the value, is as ridiculous as the assumption would be, that the value of plate lies in the workmanship of the form and ornaments; when every one knows, that all its permanent and transmissible value is inherent in the weight and

quality of the metal. Gold and silver will have the same intrinsic value into whatever form they be cast; nay, even if they remain rude, shapeless, and *without form.* Filigree-work pleases only effeminate trifiers at first, and nobody, when the fashion is gone by; and then, when it becomes necessary to transmute it into its solid materials, no ore worth putting into the scales is to be found.

If we ever meet (as we rarely meet) with that which is all, or nearly all, essence, we care not for its form or arrangement: fix where we will, detach how we will, its attraction, force, beauty, and truth is the same; still there are the *dissecti membra poetæ;* every thing breathes life, and is full of fragrance and brightness; clear as a mirror, and transparent as pure streams that show their golden bed beneath. Give me the mine of gold, or silver, or diamonds; and let who will pride themselves on the skill of the manufacture. Dip where we will, and bring it out in what chaotic fragments we will, still where the weight and

quantity is the same, it has the same undiminished worth.

Art is the bane of literature in a late stage, not its handmaid. What is rendered plausible by skilful or ingenious industry, is scarcely ever true or deep. There are so many compromises in it, so many reserves and suppressions, for the purpose of catching the consent of opposite interests and prejudices, that it becomes a mere lifeless form, of which the spirit and essence have been extracted. It deceives cold, superficial, unpenetrating minds. But they who have native sagacity highly cultivated, and have read and thought upon so wide a scope, as to be content only with what is good, reject every thing which has not the force and vivacity of unaffected and unqualified wisdom. The frank, sincere, and unsophisticated *convictions* of rich and happily-gifted minds are what we want: not dressed up, shrewdly-managed arguments or statements, and ambitious but cunning displays of false and studied sentiment. There was a time when art might be useful,

because it kept within its proper functions: it has now broke through them all, and become a great abuse: the wise have got beyond it; the ignorant may not have reached it; the mass of middling population are in full possession of it.

There is a certain quantity of seeming literature which the middle classes of society, — the persons in professions, — the rich merchants, seek, not to improve their wisdom, but to store their memories and furnish themselves with conversation. They like, therefore, what they can get at easiest; and this is commonly effected, where a great deal of art and labour of arrangement are used, and where the features are marked by exaggeration or mechanism.

That which is produced by mere labour, method, discipline, and patient reasoning, is not of that high order of knowledge which minds at once wise and refined seek in books. They aspire to be admitted to the oracles of intuitive, profound, and deeply-sensitive genius; they do not ask

for technical disquisitions formed by the square and line, but for the abrupt and mysterious breathings of magic inspiration.

Those large portions of society, whose minds have been occupied by carving out their own fortunes and elevations in life, have contracted, by irreversible habit, principles, and modes of judgment on literature, essentially variant from the ranks, whose independence and leisure have enabled them to cultivate more speculative, abstract, and spiritual wisdom. They cannot help measuring every thing by certain aptitudes to the conciliation of the multitude; by certain rules of management, expedience, and compromise. Now truth is eternal and unbending: it allows of no humourings, tamperings, barters, or exceptions; it is not at the caprice of times, places, and persons. Nor is the beauty and attraction of its form at the mercy of particular lights or positions: in careful dress or in dishabille, in every attitude and look, it is still the same; equally captivating and commanding.

Books composed of ingredients of this highest quality come forth but rarely; very few can produce them; and of the few gifted by nature with the qualities equal to the production of them, a thousand circumstances perpetually intervene, to interrupt or impede the operation of those faculties. A work of elastic and commanding genius, which has all the mastery of a ruling mind, appears very sparingly, and at irregular and protracted intervals. When it breaks out, it is commonly marked, among other characteristics, by its transparency, frankness, and ease; by the spirit and soul which pervades and over-informs the language, and an absence of all effort, struggle, and doubtful, far-fetched meaning. It seems to be a voice speaking from the dominions of thought, and purified from the heavy and hoarse atmosphere of the practical world.

None but minds of the most exquisite taste and sensibility, joined to vigorous acuteness of intellect, know how few the books of this description are. They are of

ethereal essence, entirely compact of thought, imagination, and half-spiritual emotion. They are like quicksilver, which you may join or separate into minute particles, a thousand times backwards and forwards: yet joined in one, or separate, each and all together equally form a whole!

From this class must be excluded all those works which merely adapt general principles, reasonings, sentiments, and observations, to new and temporary occasions: of which that which is essence is not peculiar to the work; but is to be better found in those of preceding authors. Now they who generalize with such force and effect, that what they thus do is received and retained in extensive circulation, are so very few, that, perhaps, far short of a hundred of this kind rise in one nation in a course of ages. We probably may not be able to name in England twenty poets, nor thirty prose-writers, who have reached this point. General truths must have profundity, novelty, and be expressed with happy force or beauty, to make their way

in right of themselves. Few general moralists are to be found between Bacon and Addison who have any eminent merit, if we except Cowley, who confined himself to a very few topics.

Men of business and professional men have no conception of any thing done for general purposes; of any labour incurred, except for a specific and individual end; and therefore they value general materials only so far as they are directed to that end, —and thus often estimate arrangement and technical skill above the matter worked on.

But *what is once really good* is *always good:* the transient and adventitious interest which attaches to a composition ought to confer little distinction on the composer.

LETTER XLVI.

5th Sept. 1824.

INDISCRIMINATE praise and adulation are disgusting; but indiscriminate cavil, censure, and contempt, are not less so. We are now advanced so far beyond *admiring nothing*, as *to dispraise every thing*. The cry of the day is, "Be piquant; spare "not; ridicule; distort; the public likes "nothing but what is bitter!" But the effect of all this is to destroy the spring of hope, and crush and extinguish the spirit of virtuous emulation. It is a trick of modern criticism to try authors by standards they have not proposed to themselves; and to assume that they have had in view ends the reverse of those at which they have bent their aim. But the grand manœuvre is to require of them incompatibilities: an union of faculties and acquirements which

the nature of our being will not allow to be united. Anxiety for fame is the disease of an ague, which keeps the patient in alternate fits of cold and heat. All mankind are conflicting with each other for mutual debasement; and each thinks himself lifted up in proportion as another is degraded. Scorn, therefore, real or affected, is the prevalent tone of modern writings and modern conversations.

The reader will perceive, that opinions and sentiments of this kind introduced into these letters are commonly the result of immediate impressions, and not of any system which has gradually and regularly led to them in the calm and uninfluenced search for abstract truths. But he cannot fairly and honestly make this the ground of an objection. In the title of this work, the author proposes *self-knowledge* as one of his subjects: *egotisms*, therefore, are strictly within his plan. Indeed it was his purpose to have introduced many more than he has done; but when he came to the point, he shrunk from the relation of many things,

of which the time is not yet arrived for speaking plainly, and in the frank and strong colours which they merit. The propriety of the details of private history, and of the characters of individuals, where the parties are not of public concern, is at least very doubtful; and as to public men, the truth cannot be spoken at all seasons, and the strong and discriminative portraits cannot always be exhibited. Some have held the maxim, *De mortuis, nil nisi verum.* I think, however, that even this wants a good deal of qualifying: there is a respect due to the grave.

I believe that I have had an opportunity, and I flatter myself a sufficient discernment, to know enough of some men, who will stand rather prominently in the page of history, to draw their characters with some accuracy, and a little more distinctly than they have yet been drawn; or, at least, a little differently. There are others not quite so historical in their personal qualities, though not less so in their rank, who in the discharge of the functions which birth had

thrown upon them, would give occasion for a good deal of free and curious comment. But I have little desire to involve myself in warfare in my old age, unless absolutely compelled to do so: my irritability is too morbid to take pleasure in contests; and there is a retributive justice which I would rather suffer to sleep, than be the painful instrument of inflicting it. It cannot be denied, indeed, that there are certain things which ought for the public benefit to be set in their true light; and there are certain expositions which go far to check and correct great abuses, and to bring forward again those securities of individual rights which the laws were intended to guard, and which power and corrupt interests have such a tendency to abuse, if not perpetually confronted and battled with. It is an idle dream that all will go well if we let it alone: incessant watchfulness, and firm and bold attack, alone can keep power within its limits.

I have one battle to fight, which, with all my love of peace, I will yet fight, if I live.

It does not concern me only; it concerns that part of our constitution, of which Britons are accustomed to make their proudest boast. Hitherto there has been a supineness on the subject which could only arise from attention not having been called to it. It is not a mere individual case to which injustice has been done; (I do not expect that the public can be made to sympathise warmly with the wrongs of a mere individual;) it is a grand principle of the constitution which has been put at defiance. If what I allude to be not capable of being established beyond all rational contradiction, then statutes and the most solemn decisions, old and new, go for nothing; and laws are no laws except as long as they are convenient or agreeable to the government administering them. I have seen enough of *irregular* tribunals to allow myself to be at their mercy; and claim the privilege of a judge and jury of the land, which the law has, in more statutes and decisions than I can number, expressly given me. My rights shall never

be *wrested* from me but by " due process " of law;" and let him who denies my right give me an opportunity of legally proving it against him, or be silent: — otherwise he is not a man of honour, or common honesty; and is as ignorant as he is dishonourable and dishonest. There is no protection but in strict and unbending law; there is no malignant villany which may not be practised, under pretence of opinion and private judgment.

But I will not farther anticipate this subject here, it requires a full and separate discussion in a volume by itself; and it shall have it, ere long. Meantime I will return to other *egotisms*, of which these letters give me the privilege. I am aware that I have dedicated more of my life to literature than prudence and worldly wisdom will justify; and that even if the pursuit itself can be justified to this extent, still many objections may be made to my management, the methods I have adopted, and the choice of subjects which I have indulged. I admit that more concentration, more

regularity of plan, and more uniformity of study, would have been better; and that I have, sometimes, wasted long and precious years in light and little-deserving paths. But what a long and momentous course I have run! Forty years of ardent curiosity, and almost unwearied labour. Done fitfully, impatiently, breathlessly, carelessly, and improvidently, no doubt: done, too, in distraction and sorrow; but always done with good faith. Out of the voluminous masses which are the records of my toil, I am willing to hope that something of essence may always be found dispersed here and there; something which can only proceed from the temperament of imagination and excursive thought.

As books multiply in such vast quantities, the respect for authorship continues perceptibly to decline. The causes of this great increase of those who resort to the press are probably too complex to be satisfactorily elucidated. Learning has certainly not increased; nor do I believe that talent, much less genius, has increased. It may

be partly attributed to a self-confidence, bred by the freedom of opinion disseminated by the French Revolution. The effect is not happy; genius and erudition are sunk in the tumultuous noise of vulgar voices; for where the restraint of awe and mysterious respect is dissolved, the mob will most listen to the loudest and coarsest tongues.

We have not at present a sober taste in literature; every thing is written to strike, without farther regard to consequences; and the judgments of all those considerate, well-disciplined, long-exercised minds, whose authority formerly gave the tone, are thrown back into the shade, or, rather, not suffered to come out of it. A noisy sort of oratorical, fluttering, flippant raillery and jest, such as is sometimes practised by advocates at the bar, is substituted for calm and dispassionate criticism; and literature is brought down to play all the tricks of the busy and the fashionable world; and to flatter all their passions, follies, and interests, instead of endeavouring to reclaim

them from them, or save others from the infection. Every thing is written *ad captandum;* and every *ruse,* which was formerly practised only in oral gladiatorship, is now transferred to the press.

It is now, therefore, more difficult than ever for an author of the old school to hold up his head above the waves which are contending round him. It is the same as in manners and dress, in which the young men differ so much from what was in use forty years ago. There are, no doubt, improvements, as well as changes for the worse: — the question is, which predominate? While certain unnecessary formalities have been thrown aside, has not a dangerous licentiousness been let in? The freedom may now and then be beneficial in some extraordinary case, by giving due scope to some great genius, which would otherwise have been cramped, or, perhaps, stifled: — but for one whom it thus usefully releases from shackles, it releases thousands only to abuse it.

It is not always safe to rely upon ancient

opinions; and it is proper that powerful-minded persons should have the liberty to think for themselves: but if they do think for themselves, they will almost always come at last to the opinions sanctioned by time. I refer especially to subjects of morals, to sentiments, and to matters of literary taste. In all these, there is seldom much final difference among the wise and the cultivated. Whole inundations of new opinions have come forth in the last thirty years; but in the next thirty they will be no more heard of: a great many of the modern dogmas of criticism will be remembered, only to be laughed or wondered at. They have suppressed many men of genius who have not had the firmness to brave their thunders or their sarcasms; but they have not raised one of their own crews into an eminence which can be rendered permanent. Many of them have already passed away, because they had nothing but charlatanism and false glitter to recommend them.

There is no sincerity or feeling in the

greater part of modern literature; no deep taste, no scholarship; nothing of that knowledge and sensibility of the simple yet intense beauties of the ancient classics, which were so predominant in such poets as Milton and Gray, and which confirmed them in directing all their efforts to excellences of perpetual interest. Many modern candidates for the poetical laurel, who have not been unsuccessful in obtaining the votes of the multitude, are ignorant even of the principles of poetical invention, and have no means of ascertaining by the experience of the manner and characteristics of Homer and Virgil, what are the properties by which imaginative fiction is rendered the equal delight of all ages. They judge only by their own shallow taste, and shallow observation of what is passing in their own day. They judge farther, by what is easiest to technical genius and false inspiration.

LETTER XLVII.

6th Sept. 1824.

I HAVE anticipated many things which would have been proper for these letters in my *Gnomica*, printed at Geneva, and finished in March last, but principally written in 1823; and though there were only seventy-five copies taken of that thick volume, and few of these have found their way to England *, I shall not repeat them here.

Among the innumerable variety of books which human ingenuity puts forth, *autobiography* is one of those which has always had most interest for me; but then it must be written with sincerity and frankness. *Montaigne*'s Essays are not curious merely as light egotistic gossip: they are full of deep instruction, and have paved the way

* A copy has been sent to the British Museum.

for modern psychology. I believe they were so esteemed by *Pascal* and *Descartes*, — two authors whose profound writings there seems a proper inclination to revive in France.

Vanity prompts egotisms, but often disguises frank confessions, which alone make egotisms valuable, or even pardonable. It requires, indeed, some nerve to confess freely our weaknesses; for though we know those which are in ourselves, we cannot see equally into the bosoms of others, and, therefore, are not sure that they are subject to similar defects. The most extraordinary, however, are the *Confessions of Rousseau*, some of which it is impossible not to assign to a cross of insanity. I believe no one need be ashamed of confessing his mental movements, if he confesses with *naïveté* and good faith. The weaknesses of which he has been ashamed, as peculiar to himself, will be recognized by the sympathy of most minds of sensibility.

First impressions were so very strong upon me in early youth, that they entirely

took away my self-command; and I was so much in their power in society, that I had little use of my faculties. I was painfully ashamed of them, but I could neither subdue nor disguise them. I did not pride myself upon being unlike others: I so little appreciated the traits which commonly mark out those who are properly qualified for those particular paths of ambition to which I was aspiring, that they caused in me a sense of self-abasement. I struggled to conform to general manners and habits; and felt myself lowered in proportion as I was conscious of my inaptitude. At the same time, this consciousness made me burn more intensely to distinguish myself in some other way, that I might counteract the defects which brought upon me so much mortification. Some minds have the sagacity and firmness to glory in the peculiarities that are the nurses of the eminence to which their hopes are bent. But Gray, I think, was one who wanted this fortitude; and it went far to crush the fruits of his genius. Gray had the extreme, and I

cannot forbear to add, contemptible foible, to wish to appear "a fine gentleman." It was the foible of his school, — of those who admired and took their manners from him. I knew many of them, principally his juniors in age, — I can except but one, — to whom I have been nearly allied, (though not in blood,) — one who prided himself on his stern plainness of thoughts and habits, oddly enough combined with an address of high polish, and a just pride, which he that trenched upon soon found his mistake to his cost, by sarcasms of retributive haughtiness that were irresistible. All are gone to the grave who were the companions of this great poet, except an eminent octogenarian *, now resident at Geneva, who in his youth had the good fortune to engage Gray's confidence and correspondence. (I do not mean to do Mr. *Mathias* injustice; but I assume that he had no personal acquaintance with the poet, whose works he has in latter years edited.)

* Bonstetten.

All affectations of singularity, like every other affectation, are repulsive, and proofs of a mean, petty mind. But singularities themselves are not in all cases to be avoided. It requires a sober and acute judgment, to determine where they may be indulged; for they who have no great qualities with which they are connected, or which may render them excusable, will do well to exert their utmost to get rid of them. A very violent love of conformity, and defect of that steadiness which can rely on its own honest taste and judgment, never can produce great things: he who listens to every one, will find every thing by turns praised, blamed, and rejected. Conformity will be of no avail to gain approbation. An author, after sacrificing his own opinions, and the line in which his own faculties can best display themselves, will not be at all nearer the attainment of the palm which he seeks from others. Others object from the love of objection, not in sincerity and from any fixed principles: they are urged either by mere caprice, or, if not, they are divided

into a thousand parties, whose canons of taste are all in conflict with each other. As the same spirit which leads to conformity in manners, leads to conformity in writing, it must lead to evil.

There are those who think that no man can *know himself*, because he always judges of himself with partiality; but in defiance of this, he must know himself better than he can know any one else, and better than any one else can know him. If he be a man of strong discernment, and integrity of mind and heart, he cannot very much mistake his own powers. If his general principles in any department of knowledge are correct, he cannot err essentially in the application of them to himself. If, for instance, his conception of what are constituted the imaginative powers, and of what consist the functions of a poetical imagination, is true, precise, and clear, he cannot greatly err in the conclusions to which he comes, when he applies this standard to his own faculties. Thus prepared and guarded, he cannot be ignorant, whether nature and culture have, or have not, qualified him to be

a poet; and he ought not to be driven from his judgment by all the misapprehensions, artifices, false criticisms, ridicules, railleries, or sarcasms, which envy, jealousy, malignity, or corruption, can put into the most ingenious and plausible forms. Of the sources of temporary fame which are adventitious, he may not be a judge, and, therefore, may not make allowance for the submission to temporary taste; but of the absolute and intrinsic qualities he cannot make a very deceitful estimate. The cases in which there is most likelihood of error are cases where the assumed faculties exist; but exist in mediocrity only. In the exact *quantum* partiality may sometimes influence the estimate.

It is when the judgment is erroneous as to what is *extrinsic* of self, that it will be erroneous on *self*. He who writes artificial poetry, and aspires to artificial beauties, will probably judge falsely of his own faculties, because he is ignorant what *are* the true and essential faculties. When once glare, exaggeration, factitious force,

and the stimulus of false splendour are indulged, the taste never returns to purity. The corrupted person, therefore, makes his estimate according to those qualities which are fitted to produce gratification to that corrupted taste.

Hence it would seem, that auto-biography can only be valuable when it is written by persons of sound judgment, as well as of observation, frankness, and sincerity. But Johnson has said that there is scarce any one, of whose life an undisguised account would not be instructive; and I have no inclination to dispute this opinion, but rather to concur with him. To reconcile this, I conceive that the facts, and opinions, and feelings, thus recorded, may still supply curious and useful knowledge to the inquisitive and sound enquirer, when the reasonings and conclusions accompanying them offer matters not to be admitted, but refuted or denied. Of such persons, we are not bound to take the judgments regarding themselves; and yet it may be amusing, at

least, to know in what scale they put themselves.

There is no tyranny which is to me more irritating and unbearable than the *arbitrium popularis auræ*. To commit one's self unnecessarily to the caprice of malignant or even wanton opinion, is to plunge into voluntary torment. With these feelings it would be madness to commit one's self to public appeal, except in cases where there can be a resort to fixed standards of estimate, as a shield against this light, inconstant, and unprincipled power. Nothing, where wilful and fortuitous opinion can have a pretence to intervene, is consistent with the peace of a refined, sensitive, and anxious mind.

LETTER XLVIII.

7th Sept. 1824.

PERHAPS it is in general as wise as it is expedient, to let false rumours and calumnies die away, and efface themselves. To notice them is to spread them, and to give them importance. On the other hand, when malignity has no check, it often perseveres till it carries its point, in establishing a belief of absolute falsehood. What is constantly repeated without contradiction, at last unites itself to things admitted by general consent. There are those who would rely on the reason or good sense of others, to detect what is unjust, unfounded, or foolish. Such persons seem to me to have a very rash and baseless confidence. I cannot perceive the operation of this reason and good sense in common minds;

but if they do exist, and are so exercised, these faculties cannot detect misrepresentations or reversals of facts.

There are some strong causes for wishing to subdue and almost eradicate that anxiety for esteem and a good name, which harasses a virtuous and a sensitive mind; — but then it cannot but recur to us, that this desire is implanted in us for wise and useful purposes; that it is a great spur to exertion to deserve well; and that, otherwise, we should be liable to fall into the most languid and slothful selfishness. If we really merit worthily of the public, the public will at last, for its own interest, in spite of its unprincipled and hateful caprices, make some approximation to justice towards us. I admit that this tardy reward too frequently does not come till the ear of him whom it concerns is closed in death; but, somehow or other, I have an undefined persuasion that even then it will not be unavailing.

The great multitude of mankind cannot *ex necessitate rei* be distinguished; but I

presume that they universally have their little ambitions, and grounds of self-satisfaction, which in their own several spheres are incitements to emulation and activity; and which, though sometimes abused, sometimes lead to the virtues appropriate to their stations. There are, indeed, other motives for strenuous labour besides the love of distinction, such as the *auri sacra fames;* but he who loves money better than fame has always a mean and groveling soul.

Since there is a passion in mankind not merely to exaggerate the faults of individuals, but to impute invented faults, it seems strange how frail humanity, which has real faults enough, can ever rise into reputation. No one is safe from detraction; no one imposes such awe as to keep off the disrespect which delights malignantly to expose him in all his nakedness. But to add to this strangeness, there have been names which a thousand heavy faults could not sink; and others, which a thousand brilliant virtues have not been able to raise into glory.

There are many who attribute the inconsistency of fame to difference of management on the part of the aspirants. I am unwilling to concede so much to the operation of this cause: I will not permit myself to believe that fame is greatly and permanently at the mercy of intrigue and artifice, because such an admission would entirely destroy the value of fame. But I cannot so far blind my understanding as to deny the temporary influence of such causes, and thus to *diminish* my estimate of the worth of that distinction which all noble spirits seek.

Now and then an author passes through life, almost, or perhaps entirely, inapprehensive of the fame which attaches to him; but this simplicity or diffidence is exceedingly rare. Vanity, and the conceit of self-importance, almost always magnify what is attained; and so it is that they often thus generate what they desire. Firm pretension, and even arrogance, commonly succeeds; the world, though capricious, are

subservient, and "stoop to the bold." — Horace says,

"Sume superbiam quæsitam meritis;"

and this is, surely, a good piece of worldly policy, though not always very amiable. Mankind are so ungenerous that they will uniformly trample on the unassuming.

In the course of my experience how many have I seen work themselves into notice and favour by a mere brazen face, and a total insensibility to just rebuffs. The public throw down their arms in mere fatigue; then comes unopposed admission; and, lastly, approved admission. What was gained in spite of the world, will be still more easily kept in spite of it. Jealous men are apt to suppose that another's celebrity is incompatible with their own; but the world confers celebrity without much enquiry into its consistency.

He who has nothing to carry his name beyond where his person carries it perhaps is as self-satisfied as he who can give it

ubiquity: he does not look beyond the respect which is shown to his *presence;* and this is often secured by other qualities than those which are the sources of fame. In truth, it is not the reality of personal consequence, but the self-opinion of it, which conveys the gratification. He who sees to the utmost of his boundary when it is only a few fields off, is as much contented with the length of his own sight, as he whose eye pierces to the distant horizon, which encircles a mighty expanse of land and ocean.

Intrinsic consciousness is the only part of the pleasure of merit, or assumed merit, of which we are secure; all else is uncertain, and may be defeated by a thousand whims, trifles, accidents, and passions. Nature has ordained, that we should desire, not only not to be inferior, but to be elevated at least a small degree in value above them. When once we can persuade ourselves that we *deserve* to be so, we grow calm and content with ourselves; slights

and neglects fall blunted from us; and our increased firmness adds to their impotence.

There is a paltry and empty clamour often attendant on those on whom some fortuitous notoriety has fallen, which, having no base in real worth, inebriates them: but this is of a different character from the fame, or self-satisfaction, which is built on true or imagined merit. It generally makes men foolish, and evaporates in *ennui* and disappointment. Yet the passion for notoriety is such, that a large part of mankind would rather have an ill fame than none. This is of a totally opposite nature from the desire of the distinction which is requisite to self-complacency: it springs from the cravings of a spurious and corrupt vanity.

When a man compares himself with others on a large scale, he must feel that among great numbers his chances of superiority are very small: but among all the paths of distinctions, how infinitely are these numbers multiplied to literary men. An author has not only his contemporaries and his

countrymen to contend with, but the dead of every age and country who have left writings behind them. It requires, then, very extraordinary merit, or very extraordinary self-delusion, to remain content with one's self after a strict scrutiny. The competitors are so innumerable, and the labours of more energetic ages so astonishing, that the entry into the lists seems almost hopeless. When a young author of warm ambition, thirsting for glory, enters a capacious library, and looks round him on the groaning shelves which bend beneath the toils of centuries and centuries, his heart must suddenly sink with the weight much more than the shelves, and the dust rise in clouds from the interminable rows of mouldy volumes, to veil his late visions of fame from his blinded sight. What amazing erudition! and, probably, what a fair proportion of genius, — of which all the memory is now buried in dry catalogues of bibliography, that no one, whose notice gives gratification, will ever examine! What

is the chance, then, for the new aspirant, when such has been the fate of the past?

" La fama, ch' invaghisce a un dolce suono
Gli superbi mortali, e par si bella,
È un' eco, un sogno, anzi d'un sogno un' ombra
Ch' ad ogni vento si delegna e sgombra." *

Modern vanity, perhaps, finds some sophistries by which it may escape from the impression of the lessons thus taught by the eloquence of time. Probably it may deem these forgotten fruits of departed genius to be nothing more than tedious pedantries which have deserved oblivion. It may flatter itself, that it is only in these latter days that we have learned to bring forth that which has in it the essence of life; — that we have now attained the art to throw off the dregs, and preserve only what is pure and eternal.

We need not labour to prove the infatuation of these assumptions. There never, indeed, was more artifice than at present; but it has not been used to purify our liter-

* Tasso, *Gerus.* c. xiv. st. 63.

ature.; — it has been used to introduce false metal, and cover dross. It has given an outside polish plausible to the eye, and apparently of genuine material; but which will not bear analysis and decomposition. It is either a disguised theft, or, if it is novel, it is not true. It is a factitious ingenuity, like a moon upon a stage, which looks silver, but gives no light or warmth. Whatever is artificial has no vitality in it: it loses its charms upon being handled or steadily looked upon.

LETTER XLIX.

8th Sept. 1824.

I AM not sorry that I have spent so many years on the Continent; it has effaced numerous prejudices from my mind, which would not, while confined to one's native country, have been got rid of. With all the merits of England, such an island cannot but be the nurse of strong prejudices. But it is not by travelling post from city to city, looking at the *sights*, and flying off again, that this is to be done. Knowledge is to be attained gradually in a calm and continued residence: — native character, manners, habits, institutions, climate, do not display themselves to a hasty traveller. The pictures, buildings, scenery, may be superficially viewed; but even these only superficially.

Literature is another important subject which cannot be learned by him who passes

rapidly through a country. Innumerable things in Italian literature were offered to my attention when in Italy, which never could have occurred either at home or in hasty journies. If I had not much time for profound study of its authors while resident there, the whole apparatus of its learning was presented and familiarised to me. The same thing has happened regarding French literature, while at Geneva.

The English are much more luxurious than the nations on the Continent, because they have more money to spend; but they are not richer in the best sense of that word; they are not more at their ease; and do not more possess a surplus above their expenditure. I do not deny that the wealth of England is real: I do not entertain the ignorant and blind position that it is "paper "money!"—"fictitious wealth!" because I cannot believe that *corn, goods, manufactures, buildings, utensils, ships,* &c. &c. are *paper,* or *fiction!* But the opinion I do entertain is this, that this wealth is, at present, not well distributed for the happiness

of the people; and that, if wealth be a means and not an end, it is excessive, because, in the processes by which it must be acquired, an unwholesome population is encouraged both in quantity and in habits; and that not only the *augmented* number thus becomes unsound, but that the morals of the *proper* number, which would otherwise have been healthful, thus become corrupted. Thus the wealth is too *artificial*, though not fictitious; and on that account is not solid, but liable to sudden and frightful changes.

But I do not mean here to write a disquisition on political economy: I have done enough of that in other places, and on other occasions; and I see no reason to bate an iota of the arguments I then held. I perceive with pain, not new but deep, that the undue interests of commerce and manufactures will always prevail over the fair competition of those which are more firm, permanent, and wholesome, because they have always more busy and intriguing advocates; and that governments, or at

least the British government, will always listen and bend to the clamours of these ceaseless pleaders of their own cause, because they suppose them to be most convenient to the frail influences by which political power is carried on. I never had so little confidence in the prosperity of England as at present; and I believe that all those appearances of splendor, on which many so much rely, are deceitful. The wounds in society, created mainly by the vacillations of government with regard to corn and finance in 1814 and 1815, will never be recovered: they ruined its yeomanry and its gentry, and, by consequence, its peasantry. No advocate for commerce values it more highly, or deems it more necessary, than I do, so long as it keeps its due proportion to agriculture: up to this point I know as well as any one that it is *necessary* to the prosperity of agriculture itself. I admit, also, that the luxury of the yeomanry, and the practices of the country banks, wanted a *gentle* check. But the absurdity is, that all those arguments of policy

or principle, which, if they applied in a slight degree to agriculture, necessarily apply in a threefold degree to commerce, have been taken up and applied by ministry to the *former*, but entirely waved or resisted as to the *latter*.

I do not perceive on the Continent the operation of any of these highly artificial causes; and so far I think both the agriculture and trade of the Continent in a sounder and less fluctuating state. Nothing is surely more injurious and miserable to society than uncertainty and restless change. At this day I am well aware how very unfashionable a doctrine it is, to found any argument on an evil affecting merely the higher classes of society; but where there is reason, the cry of fashion against a doctrine ought to be little attended to. If we admit that where there is wealth, it *must* be possessed in unequal portions, (which is a truth impossible to be successfully controverted,) then there must be inequality of rank. Now whatever degrades the high to the low is a positive misery, not

to be compensated by lifting the low into high; for the latter receive no pleasure from the change at all proportionate to the unhappiness of the former. He who was born to a humble station may enjoy content in it; but he who was born to education, independence, leisure, and refined manners, cannot descend to be a hewer of wood, and drawer of water, without intolerable suffering. Wherever there is a state of society, which has a violent tendency to these ups and downs, it seems to me to be in an extremely bad, if not the worst, condition.

I earnestly hope that I am wrong in the belief that England is now in that condition; far more so than it ever was before; and far more so than any other country not in a state of revolution. It, of course, happened in France, and in other countries which France overran during the revolutionary rage: but I speak of governments in a settled state. It seems to me to be an almost inevitable consequence of the present working of the elements of society

in England, to which there is little similitude in any thing upon the Continent; unless in the stock-jobbing, of which the contagion is spreading fast from England into every little continental city; and this, I must confess, is one of the very worst. It is almost the sole employ of a large part of the monied population of Geneva.

I am disinclined to enter into any details on this subject, where I cannot go into full length: but I have watched it and examined it with some intenseness; and from a good deal of acquaintance with the *family history* of the kingdom; from a curiosity about manners, and habits, and personal character; and from some insight into the amount and descent of the estates of England, — all extended over a period of nearly half a century, which has been marked by mighty events and extraordinary financial operations, — I am sure that my opinions are not taken up lightly, and that I see the progress of this change which I depreciate operating by too palpable steps. As long as Mr. Pitt carried on his bold and

splendid, but not very solid, financial system, there was much danger to the stability of the ancient property and rank of the kingdom; but yet there was a strong counteraction to the evil, in the prosperity of agriculture, and the advance of the value of estates. The evil has been since unqualified by any such good; and, what is worse, it has been so contrived, that this temporary countervailing good has since been turned into an aggravation of the evil; for it has induced proprietors to burden their lands when high at a rate which, when again reduced, became absolutely and literally ruinous. All the stagnation of value caused by the American war did not bring one tenth of the devastation which the subsequent sudden rise, followed by the still more sudden fall, produced.

If this was the natural and inevitable course of events, it was to be lamented, but not censured. For my part, I cannot bring my mind even to entertain the doubt that it might be so. I am well aware that a change from war to peace must create

some derangements. I hear a great deal, too, about the sudden cessation of vast expenditure; a somewhat inaccurate supposition, for there could be little *cessation*, though there certainly was a great *alteration* of its channels; one which diverted it from non-productive to productive labour. But after every former war, the effect of peace was prosperity; and of prosperity, remunerating prices.

At all periods of society new wealth has had its influence in every country; and in the nature of things it cannot be otherwise. But, whenever the money-getters prevail in very predominant proportions over hereditary independence and leisure, and over the liberal professions, — in all which, *mind* is the instrument of power, rather than riches, — it seems to me that the state of society is, at the moment, hollow and unhealthy; and that it is not only liable to great and disastrous mutations, but that it *cannot* last long. I go farther; — I think that it *ought not* to last long. Great improvements are wanted in continental society;

but it seems to me to be in a state which has a tendency to improve: that of England is of that highly artificial and perverse kind, which has, I am afraid, a strong tendency to deteriorate.

It is a most undesirable and morbid thing, when the system operates to draw all the wealth to the capital. And when, in an aristocratical country, aristocratical honours, which were intended to counterpoise wealth, are given in aid of it, then new wealth, too powerful already, becomes irresistible; then the vast accession to the Lords' House, and the nature of the choice made, has entirely changed the constitution. The families of the kingdom are now so utterly mixed, from both extremities of high and low, that all that deep and inherent influence of hereditary grandeur, arising from the historical associations of the mind, which formerly gave to aristocracy its only legitimate force, is utterly annihilated. Perhaps there is not so much jealous hatred of it as it sometimes formerly awakened: but there is a much more dangerous feeling

towards it, — contempt and indifference! I can see no similitude between the manners and habits in England in this day, and those, which prevailed at the commencement of Pitt's administration.

The nobles in most of the countries of Europe are worn out, but from totally different causes from those which have occasioned the fall in England. In other countries they have been destroyed by the sword, been blown up, or hunted to death; in England they have been exhausted by debilitating medicines, and bled to death. I am not so narrow as to plead the separate interests of particular and small classes of the community. If this arrangement of society be not for the good of the whole, I abandon it: but I deny that it is allowable to change it lightly; I deny that it may be changed upon superficial or capricious speculations and theories. What has been long established, and has prevailed more or less in all nations and ages, has a *primâ facie* evidence strongly in its favour, independent of argument. Even if the

reasoning be finally and conclusively against it, it must not be suddenly and violently changed; because individuals who have contracted their habits upon the faith of a government ought not to be suddenly and cruelly sacrificed.

But that an hereditary nobility, forming one of three branches of a national legislature, is not a form of government unwise and injurious to the other classes, is capable of being established as well by resistless reasoning as by historical experience. There is, therefore, no room for the plea of debasing the class of nobles so organized, on the ground of the general good. And the question is, if we admit the debasement, (which many of course will not admit,) whether it is of a kind to affect this fundamental principle of the purpose of their establishment? This is a nicer question: but I do not hesitate to say unequivocably, that I am convinced the debasement has essentially affected this fundamental principle.

The foreign nobility, being for the most part merely titular, have always stood upon

a different principle from the British, and ought, therefore, to be treated in a different manner. As far as mere descent goes, there are more old nobility on the Continent than in England.

LETTER L.

9th Sept. 1824.

I AM sorry to find, that on looking back on my diary for the last six years, I have made scarcely any memoranda of the objects I have seen, beyond the mere date. I have trusted too much to my memory; and now I experience, too late, that my general impressions are too indefinite for local description. They are not perhaps less useful to the imagination, but they will not supply materials sufficiently particular for the tour-writer. Yet I began my diary on 1*st Jan.* 1819, with the following observation: — "I have found, as I have grown older, the memory of particular impressions so soon and so entirely pass away, that I have resolved to begin a sort of diary, which may contain a few memoranda, however slight and imperfect, of any marked train

of reflections, course of reading, or circumstance, which may occupy me.

" But nothing worth noticing occurred this day. It was a bright morning; and the sun on the Lake of Geneva, on its banks covered with scattered cottages, villas, and hamlets, and on the magnificent blue mountains of the Jura behind them, formed a scenery as lovely as imagination could create."

Not a single detail do I find from this day till April 1. of this year, when I have entered the following notice of a visit to *Coppet*:— " This day we went in a large boat up the lake to visit *Coppet*. We passed on the left bank *Genthod*, the residence formerly of *Charles Bonnet*, and the scene of many of the letters of *John Müller*, the historian, as well as *Versoy*. On the opposite bank is *Hermance*, which is in the dominions of Savoy.

" *Madame de Stael*'s celebrated chateau disappointed me. Coppet is a post-town in the great route to Lausanne from Geneva, but very small. It has one little

street, through which the road runs. Close at the back of the centre, lifted on a terrace, (probably not fifteen feet broad,) is the front of the chateau. The principal sitting rooms are all on the story above the ground-floor; so that they look on the lake directly over the tops of the houses of the town. A little cross street at the entrance of the town, up a steep ascent, soon brings us to the gate and outer court of the chateau, which abuts on the road. The entrance to the back (or garden) front is under a gateway of the west wing. The door in the centre opens to a spacious area, in which is a handsome flight of stone stairs, that lead to the principal story. An anti-room opens to the billiard-room, which is in the centre of the lake front. To the left is the principal bed-room, where are portraits of Mons. and Mad. Necker; beyond, two smaller rooms; in the latter of these Mad. de Stael's writing table; next, in the east wing, a small anti-room with two small book-cases, and one or two hundred volumes of common books; and beyond, another

bed-room, with a portrait of Mad. de Stael; her father's bust on a table by her side.

"To the right of the billiard-room is the drawing-room, hung with prints; beyond, looking westward, another drawing-room. The dining-room is through the anti-room, in the garden-front.

"The gardens consist of a long slip running backwards towards the Jura mountains, flanked on each side by trees and plantations; to the west, it runs parallel with the road that continues the direction of the cross street beyond the gate of the chateau. To the east, its limits are a broken declivity, well planted and intermixed with old trees; at the bottom is a narrow streamlet, which, crossing under the street of the town, discharges itself into the lake.

"There is little variety in this slip of ground, consisting of a very few acres; and attempted to be laid out in walks and plantations after the English fashion. It seldom, if at all, commands a view of the mountains behind; and scarcely once of the lake in

front. In the centre is a clump of funereal firs. The ground is nearly flat, or what is worse, has a gentle and imperceptible rise; so that the view from the garden-front is dull and *triste*.

"As to both banks of the lake, as we ascend from Geneva, they at every move decline in beauty; the ground is worse shaped, and worse covered; the vegetation less luxuriant; the trees poor and stunted; and the whole has a sort of bare, marshy, chilling look."

My next note is of a visit (23d May) to the cathedral of Geneva, to inspect the monuments of *D'Aubigné* and the *Duke de Rohan*, which are noticed in numerous books; and the following day, 24th May, of a drive to *Ferney* to see Voltaire's residence; but of this I have given an account in my *Letters from the Continent* (printed at *Lee Priory*, 1821).

On June 23d, I find the following short entry:—"In the evening, drove to Coligny, and saw the *Diodaté* house, inhabited in 1816 by Lord Byron: the situation mag-

nificent; the house excellent. It stands at the top of a rapidly-descending vineyard, running down to the lake. The saloon extends the length of the lake front; windows looking on the lake, and at each end; which last command one way a noble view of the lake and of Geneva, the other up the lake. Up stairs in the area, in the centre, between the bed-chambers, is a set of old portraits of the French monarchy from Charles VII., — some of them curious."

At the end of the following month, I find a short account of *A Tour round the Lake*, which I will venture to record here.

" July 28. (1819.) Set off from Geneva at nine, A.M., passed through *Coppet;* rested at *Nyon;* dined at *Rolle;* and then passing *Morges*, arrived at *Lausanne* about seven in the evening.

" July 29. Walked over Lausanne; ascended to the cathedral, a magnificent Gothic edifice; descended to the house formerly inhabited by Gibbon; and walked on the terrace of his garden. Set off at three,

P. M. for *Vevay*, and arrived at six. Walked to the principal church, and on the promenade by the lake.

"July 30. Left Vevay at nine, A. M., for *Villeneuve;* passed by *Montroux* and *Chillon;* saw the chateau; passed through Villeneuve, six miles; crossed the flat of the valley at the head of the Lake; came in two miles to the banks of the Rhone; crossed this rapid torrent in a ferry-boat; joined the grand road on the other side of the lake; arrived at *St. Gingulph* at one; rested two hours; set off in rain through *Meillerai* to *Evian;* arrived at *Thonon* about seven, and slept there.

"July 31. Set off for Geneva at nine; passed through *Dovaine* at eleven; and reached Geneva at one, through *Bessigny* and *Coligny*.

"For a short tour nothing can be more perfect, more beautiful, or more interesting than this. On the outset, the same scenery continues on the *Jura* hills to *Coppet*, as commences from *Geneva;* except that as we advance the campagnes and chateaux are less thick. The Jura mountains do not

come down to the banks of the lake, for there is something of a comparative flat between them, which, after a little swell, falls again to the foot of the mountains. This intervening land is covered with pasturage, and stripes of corn, and vineyards. It is not ill wooded; but the trees in general are not large; and the sides of the Jura are deficient in clothing.

"*Coppet* (Mad. de Stael's) was in early times one of the lordships and residences of Otto de Grandson, whose altar-tomb is in the cathedral of Lausanne.

"*Nyon* is a pretty town: the chateau where the governors (or baillies) formerly resided, and which office Bonstetten held some years ago, stands perched up magnificently above the town; and, retaining its ancient shape, forms a most picturesque feature.

"We passed *Prangin*, where Joseph Bonaparte resided. Here are interspersed woods and covers down to the lake, where Joseph used to hunt.

"The *Canton de Vaud* commences on

the Genevan side of Coppet. Between Nyon and Morges is the district of *La Côte*, so famous for its wines of that name. *Rolle* is one long street, not so picturesque as Nyon.

"We next came to *Aubone*, of which the famous traveller Tavernier bought the barony in 1669, on his return from Asia, where he had amassed great riches. Here he built the chateau, because he deemed the situation superior to any thing he had seen, except in the East.

"*Morges* has a handsome wide street with good buildings.

"The country continues nearly of one character, till we approach *Lausanne*, which, mounted on a hill above the lake before us, with its magnificent cathedral, varies the landscape. The town of *Lausanne* is the most beautiful I have seen. It stands on a cluster of small hills and vallies. The terrace that overlooks the meadows and vineyards between the town and the lake, and which is on the garden-front of the houses on the west side of the grand

street, commands views of the lake, cross to *St. Gingulph* and *Meillerai*, along to *Vevay*, up to the head of the lake, and down to *Geneva*, by *Morges*, *Rolle*, *Nyon*, and *Coppet*. The terraces of the hotel *Lion d'Or*, and of Gibbon's house, command this view.

"In the cathedral are tombs of Pope Felix V., (Comte de Savoie,) of several bishops of Lausanne, and of Otto de Grandson, — a recumbent warrior on an altar-tomb; his shield bearing *six pales, over all, a bend charged with three escallops.** Also several modern inscriptions, including English.

"The road from Lausanne to *Vevay* is much more striking, more picturesque, and romantic, than from Geneva to Lausanne. The mountains have their feet in the very lake; they rise from it in every variety of form; they are more broken, more intersected by deep ravines, more spotted with cottages, and hamlets, and churches, and

* The English branch bore *three eagles*.

chateaux to the very top; clothed with the most beautiful intermixture of vineyards, pasturage, and trees.

"*Vevay* is thus beautifully situated; but the town itself, though not ill built, is dull. Here Edmund Ludlow died, 1693, and was buried.

"The road from Vevay to *Villeneuve* is, if possible, still more beautiful. *Montroux* is the most picturesquely placed of all the villages I ever saw. The castle of CHILLON projects into the lake. It was built by Peter Comte de Savoie, who died here 7th June, 1268. His corpse was carried to the monastery of Hautecombe. We saw the vaults for prisoners described by Lord Byron. Villeneuve is a short distance beyond.

"After passing the rich meadows and corn patches on the flat at the head of the lake, we passed the rapid Rhone in a ferry-boat. We now entered the canton of *Vallais*. The Alpine rocks here spring from the lake, and are nearly perpendicular; and a great part of them is covered with mag-

nificent wood. They continue to be of the same character by *St. Gingulph* and *Meillerai*, as far as *Evian*.

" The *Chablais* commences in the middle of St. Gingulph, and extends to *Bessigny*, near Geneva.

" The character of these alpine rocks has been beautifully given by Rousseau, in his description of *Meillerai* in the N. Heloise.

" On entering *Thonon*, we see on our right the towers of the old convent of *Ripaille*, the foundation and retreat of Amedee VIII. (Pope Felix V.) It has been purchased by Gen. *Dupas*, a French General, a native of Evian, for whom see *Biographie des Hommes Vivants*.

" From Thonon to *Bessigny* the route runs a little more inward, a few fields from the lake. It appears a rich agricultural district. *Hermance* was the retirement of the widow of one of the kings of Burgundy.—

" Aug. 26. Left Geneva at half past nine, A. M., for the baths of *St. Gervais*

in Savoy; passed Chêne, Anemasse in Savoy, Contamier, &c., and dined at Bonneville; passed Cluse, Maglan, St. Martin, Sallenche, and reached the baths of St. Gervais at eight in the evening.

" Sept. 1. Returned to Geneva.

" Sept. 7. Returned again to *St. Gervais.*

" Sept. 16. Went from St. Gervais to *Chamouni.*

" Sept. 17. Confined by the rain to the hotel at Chamouni.

" Sept. 18. Ascended *Mountainvert;* went on to the *Mer de Glace;* descended to the source of the *Arveiron.*

" Sept. 19. Returned to St. Gervais.

" Sept. 30. Dined at the house of the Curé of *St. Nicholas.* (For an account of *St. Gervais,* see *Letters from the Continent.*)

" Oct. 4. Returned to Geneva.

" Oct. 7. Left Geneva for Italy. (For this route I must refer to the above *Letters.*)

" Oct. 26. Descended the Appenines, and reached Florence; and the next day, for the first time, visited the celebrated Gallery of Pictures.

"Nov. 15. Visited the Laurentian and Magliabechi libraries.

"Nov. 20. Began my poem of *Odo, Count of Lingen.*

"Dec. 2. My friend Sir Mark Sykes departed for Rome.

"Dec. 31. Began to write Vol. II. of *The Hall of Hellingsley.*"

N. B. My diary of the next year, 1820, and up to March 1. 1821, is at present mislaid, if not lost. (We quitted Florence April, 1820, arrived at Naples by sea at the end of May; and leaving it about 8th Dec. reached Rome in a few days.)

"March 13. 1821, at Rome. A bulletin came out, stating that the Austrians had forced all the Neapolitan defiles with little resistance, and reached *Aquila.*

"March 23. Second volume of *Res Literariæ* finished at a Roman press.

"April 7. Saturday. Quitted Rome about 12 at noon, in our way to Florence. Slept at Monterosa.

"April 8. Dined at Viterbo; slept at Montefiascone.

" April 9. Dined at Aquapendente; ascended the Appenines; slept at Radicofani. (An extraordinary eminence.)

" April 10. Dined at La Scala; slept at Buonconvento.

" April 11. Dined at Sienna; saw the fine cathedral; slept at Poggibonsi.

" April 12. Arrived at the York hotel, Florence; saw the Prince of Carignan on horseback on entering the gate.

" April 17. Quitted Florence (a second time); slept at Povigliane on the Appenines.

" April 18. Slept at Bologna.

" April 19. Slept at Ferrara; saw Tasso's prison, Ariosto's monument, his chair, and autographs of Ariosto and Tasso.

" April 20. Slept at Rovigo.

" April 21. Bated at Monselice, a few miles to the left of which lies Petrarch's *Arqua*. Slept at Padua.

" April 22. Arrived at Mestre; went in gondolas to Venice.

" April 23. Saw St. Mark's, the cathedral, &c.

" April 26. Went to the Lido; visited St. Mark's library.

" April 27. Left Venice; slept at Mestre.

" April 28. Dined at Padua; slept at Vicenza.

" April 29. Slept at Verona; visited the cathedral.

" April 30. Dined on the banks of the lake of Garda; slept at Brescia.

" May 1. Slept at Bergamo.

" May 2. Reached Milan to dinner.

" May 4. Quitted Milan; detained an hour at the bridge of the Tisino, lately broken down by the Austrians, on occasion of the Piedmontese insurrection; slept at Novara.

" May 5. Bated at Vercelli; slept at Cigliano.

" May 6. Reached Turin.

" May 7. Left Turin; slept at Susa.

" May 8. Ascended Mont Cenis; slept at Lansleburg, at the Savoy foot; saw an old woman in full health, who produced a certificate to prove her age to be 106.

" May 9. Slept at St. Jean, Maurienne; saw the miserable cathedral where Humbert aux Blanches Mains, Comte de Savoie, (or Maurienne,) was buried.

" May 10. Slept at Chambery.

" May 11. Passed Aix; inspected the baths; dined at Romilly; slept at Frangy.

" May 12. Reached, about noon, Secheron (Dejeans), Geneva.

" May 15. Removed to a campagne, called *L'Imperatrice*, formerly belonging to Napoleon's Empress, Josephine, having a good command of the Lake.

" May 21. Began Vol. III. of *Res Literariæ.*"

The following is a stanza of an imperfect poem at this time.

" Lake of eternal fame, along whose sides
The lofty mountains run, whose line divides
Two mighty kingdoms from Helvetia's vales,
Again I haunt thy groves, and meads, and dales!"

" June 20. 1821. Finished the MS. of *Hall of Hellingsley;* and sent it to Longman's.

" Nov. 15. Quitted L'Imperatrice for apartments in the town of Geneva, for the winter season.

" Nov. 26. Received a printed copy of *Hall of Hellingsley* from England.

" Jan. 4. 1822. Met Prof. Pictet, Prof. Prevost, Prof. Rossi, M. Sismondi, M. Dumont, M. Hesse, at M. Bonstetten's, at an evening conversation-party.

" Feb. 9. Finished *Libellus Gebensis;* — only thirty-seven copies.

" April 15. Removed from the town to campagne *Guigonat.*

" Oct. 15. Sent the first sheet of Odo, Count of Lingen, to press.

" Oct. 18. Quitted campagne Guigonat for campagne Roguin Cramer, at Secheron.

" April 17. 1824. Removed to campagne de Watteville, at Petit Saconnex."

Sept. 9. During this period, from May 1821 to this day, I have finished Vol. III. of Res Literariæ, Polyanthea, Amelia, Anti-Critic, What are Riches, Libellus Gebensis, Odo, Gnomica, Letters on Lord Byron,

Inquiry into the Law of Descent of Peerages, &c., all of which have been interrupted by volumes of private correspondence, both on business and on literature.

I indulge the hope that I shall find the lost part of the diary before I finish these letters, because it will enable me to notice a few things, on which I find that I do not dare trust my memory; — I mean I do not dare trust it in relating facts. That mellowed memory which becomes half transmuted into imagination I could trust; and there are occasions on which this is the most useful as well as the most interesting, but it is not so on all occasions. And here I wish to introduce, among more general matter, the precision of what has actually occurred. It may seem stupid to give a mere dry itinerary of so many celebrated places, which offer such innumerable subjects for inspection and examination; but I do not choose to say either trite things or inaccurate things. And every one must know, that to say any thing new on these topics, which, however important, have

been discussed and described by such numerous authors, must require some rare acuteness of discernment, or extraordinary opportunity of observation. I have put the list, therefore, merely by way of connecting myself with the places, and must leave the details of them to be collected from the travellers and topographers who have printed such abundant accounts of them. The only novelty which an author can now hope to give, is in his own sentiments and reflections. A man of literature may make these localities what are vulgarly called "pegs," on which to hang the rich furniture of his own mind.

But in this latter case there must at least be a memory of feelings and of images, though not of minute and accidental particularities of conformation, or of the technicalities of art. I had hoped that I had retained enough of these higher fruits of travel, without the necessity of wasting labour in details written at the moment. But I find that I have deceived myself. I have either staid too long, or the objects have been too numerous, or my mind has

been since too busily employed in other things, or those things have been of too violent or too intense an interest. I could not have believed that I should have forgot so much.

As to painting, statuary, and architecture, it matters not; — it would have been idle meddling with subjects which have been adequately discussed; or if not, cannot surely be supplied by the superficial haste of a traveller, who may amuse himself with these exhibitions, but cannot rationally hope to convey to others an instruction, which can only be done by those men of genius, whose lives have been dedicated to the respective branches. There have, indeed, been a few gifted beings, not artists, on whose opinions and descriptions, as on those of Gray the poet, when he visited Italy, we hang with deep interest and delight. But this is a very rare case. It would be a piece of strange and rash conceit in almost any other unprofessional person to make the same pretension. The common guide-books can supply this sort

of information, at least, far better than a common traveller. And all that can be done in the way of ordinary compilation has already been done by such authors as *Eustace* and *Forsythe;* not indeed with much discrimination or nicety of taste; but what man of original mind or nice taste would drudge through such a task? And they who want vivacity, untired exuberance of words, unrestrained imagery, and fearless comments and speculations on all the huddle of objects which beset, in gay confusion, a tourist in search of novelties, wonders, strange manners, and strange people, may find it in the rapid and self-confident pen of Lady *Morgan.*

I do not at all regret, therefore, not having registered the materials which would have furnished a *Tour through Italy,* because it is not wanted; or if it were, I am sufficiently conscious it would not have been my lot to have done it well; but I regret it, because I did not embody, while I might, those more precious images and emotions which I now find necessary for the work I had contemplated.

LETTER LI.

10th Sept. 1824.

As my letters approach their termination, I begin too late to regret the want of a severer choice of matter, and of economy of space. But much anxiety never yet did any good; to me at least it has always had the effect of causing me to abandon a work soon after its commencement. Restraint and laborious effort are radical faults which destroy vitality. Extreme care to avoid censure and satisfy all never answers its purpose. There is no escape from cavil: where one is pleased, another is sure to find fault; and if we listen to all, we must do like the old man and his jackass, and at last throw the thing over the bridge and sink it.

It is an age of cavil: hundreds of writers, both ingenious and mechanical, live by

selling their bitterness for lucre; and one of the public amusements of the day is to bait authors, as it formerly was to bait bears. They have carried it a little too far; and habits of indiscriminate severity, or sarcasm, or ridicule, have gradually lost much of their effect. But the operation on the national mind has been mischievous: there is something ungenerous in a habit of objection; and the intellectual spirit of the country has been checked and chilled. The multitude are sufficiently inclined to pull down genius and literary eminence, without the aid of any of their own tribe. If it crushed bad authors, perhaps it would do more good than harm; but it never does;—they are too callous to feel ridicule; besides they have nothing to lose, and they can use intrigue and artifice to shield themselves, to which genius never condescends. The only fair protection against this hostility would be to impose on the critic the necessity of subscribing his own name and description to his censure; this, in nineteen cases out of twenty, would destroy the sting,

because it would either bring with it the detection of the motive, or would show the insignificance of the hand from which it came.

There is nothing, which, if taken in a perverse light, may not be given an unfavourable character. The trite trick is to set up a measure or model, quite opposite to that which the author had in view; and assume it to be that by which he intended to abide; as, when he writes to the imagination, to call for reason; and when he writes to the reason, to call for imagination. But every variety of faculty, and every variety in the manner of displaying it, is in truth desirable. The beauty and excellence of the mind is as little confined to one shape as is that of the forms of material nature. The thoughts, which are confined to no track or method, sometimes throw as much light as those which are put into a more regular course of display. Wandering and irregular excursions sometimes cast a happy radiance where it was least expected,

and whither regular paths would never have brought it.

If I had been condemned never to bring forth a line, till I could produce it in its due place, as part of a regular system, not an atom of thought would ever have been developed by me. All would have expired in an early part of the mechanical process, and the bantling would have been killed by nursing. The reader has now from me a vast quantity of matter, thrown together without apparent order; but if it be intrinsically good, the want of method will not destroy or much diminish its value. General truths do not depend upon a particular order.

Nice and subtle thoughts elude the grasp, where long and habitual skill is not practised to get possession of them, and secure their permanence. Even then they must be taken when they come: lose a moment to take them in due order, and they are gone! Thoughts of this kind are the golden ore; however plausible those which are more formal may appear. We do not often find

books composed of such matter. There is scarcely one printed work in a thousand which is not mainly mechanical.

I am not satisfied with these letters; indeed I am not one of those who are often satisfied with self. Yet I must go on in my own way, or I should do nothing. New habits and severer discipline are not to be attained at my age. I have worked hard, however little management and economy of time and strength I may have used. It is now the *hundred and twelfth* day since I commenced my *Letters on Lord Byron*, and not one single day have I suffered to pass in idleness. In that time this is the *ninety-eighth* letter I have written for the press: the intervening days were occupied by transcribing the twenty-eight first of the letters on Lord Byron. All this, indeed, proves nothing but industry: how far the application of my time has been successful, it is not for me to decide. I am too conscious of a thousand imperfections; but I will not suffer myself to be attacked by malice or ignorance with impunity. I can

return scorn for scorn, where the object is not too insignificant for notice. I know that I have worked honestly, and in a spirit of pure and unmercenary enthusiasm which few men retain to my age; nor will I admit that I have been engaged in trifles, and the mere baubles of literature. I have turned my mind to topics of extensive use as well as ornament; and I have toiled hard, occasionally, to employ my reason, as well as my imagination and my heart. I have always writen with frankness; seldom, perhaps, with the prudence, or rather cunning, which is necessary to secure the world's applause. Every thing has been unstudied in its workmanship and outward address; but much, I hope, deeply studied in its matter. I know that I have not spared thought; and I cannot but consider that thought to have been frequently intense. Above all, I am sure that my thoughts, whether right or wrong, have been always my own.

LETTER LII.

11th Sept. 1824.

No one, who exerts his mind strenuously, perseveringly, and honestly, for the discovery and dissemination of truth, ought to despair, or to be much discouraged at the first apparent neglect of his endeavours. He will find the result of his labours come round to him, when he least suspects it: his statements, and arguments, and opinions, will have worked silently and gradually, unperceived by him; and at last, what he had supposed to have fallen dead at the first step, he will find to have made, by its quiet and noiseless progress, the greater way.

There is a strong and energetic sense, which, if directed to questions of general interest, *must* burst through obstacles. I mean by this faculty, something which has

a directness and rectitude, as well as activity; something more than mere reason; a power of perception, not gradual, but almost instantaneous and intuitive. Reason may come in aid to examine and try, but it precedes reason. It has a sharper point than reason, which afterwards examines, and analyses, and arranges, the passage it has opened.

When imagination and sentiment are added to this mighty talent thus fortified by reason, the combined powers, if turned to authorship, produce something, in almost every page, of which the vitality cannot be destroyed, or rendered finally inoperative. The class of books consisting of such matter is that, perhaps, beyond all others, which is confined to the smallest number. And yet this very instantaneous and excursive movement is what, for its apparent irregularity, dull and technical critics censure. We know, on Shakspeare's authority, that the business of the *poet* is to "glance" from one extremity to the other, in every direction; but this prerogative must not be

confined to the poet. It is not by slow mechanical processes that great truths are arrived at; though artificial method, and what are called chains of reasoning, look so very plausible.

If what is here said be correct, it will show why mere labour and discipline, without the addition of higher faculties, can do so little. They want that strong, piercing, and intuitive sense, of which I have spoken. They never, therefore, are original, forcible, or just. The utmost at which they can arrive is the application of a known truth to a particular case. But genius (for this intuitive perception is a main ingredient of genius) is independent of discipline and accidents, and mainly even of acquirements, and works as it were by inspiration.

It is not that which is good by rules, which can be brought to the artist's measure, that is valuable. There is a spirit within, not to be analysed, not to be discriminated by words, which gives the attraction. All works of genius have this; works without

genius, though displaying all the skill of art, have not a spark of it.

In the course of a long life, a strenuous author of genius accumulates a mass of golden ore, which puts him beyond much fear of being removed from the eminence that he has raised; loose, careless, gatherings may slide from under his feet, or be shaken by the winds of caprice, or slights of thoughtless negligence; but perseverance will settle his labours into a firm and large consistence, sufficient both in size and strength to become durable.

I have not the presumption to suppose myself one of this order; but I still go on to do my best; and by the uninterrupted performance of my daily task, to swell, though slowly yet with certainty, my not unvirtuous labours into something, which, by their quantity at least, shall have some weight. I cannot believe that many would have toiled with a spirit so unbroken under such mighty trials, as it has been my lot to endure. I cannot reason on my ardour for literature, — my reason would have

abandoned it thirty years ago; but it is somehow a part of my being; I cannot separate it from me; I live for it, and in it; I rise to it in the morning; I go to my rest with it; and think of it at midnight, and in my sleep. I have, however, at last, almost laid books aside, and am conversant only with my own thoughts. These thoughts never fail me; every day presents them in abundance; and I hope with some diversity and novelty. I know with what anxiety I apply my thoughts; how much of intenseness is spent upon them; and how deeply and sincerely I search for truth.

It is human nature to find fault; and my endeavours have yet met with but sparing and rare encouragement. Whatever we do, still objectors will find that we have taken the wrong method; and I am told, when I enlarge my mind into wide fields of enquiry, that I disperse and dilute my attention, instead of concentrating it; and that I become feeble and inaccurate by expansion. If I am, indeed, feeble and in-

accurate, then I admit that my expansion is worthless. But extent of stretch is not always feebleness, nor length of view indistinctness.

There were periods of my life when one or two subjects engrossed my mind. Then the objectors sneered at me for narrowness, and an exclusive addiction of my faculties and industry. Thus it is, that do what we will, we cannot escape censure. What extreme folly, therefore, not to go one's own way? for then, at least, one person will be pleased.

What has a man of fair intellect to fear, if he exercises in integrity his acuteness and good sense? He should despise cavils, and dishonest comments, and calumnies. Nine tenths of the arrogant persons who affect to criticise, and to dictate to the public mind, are bubbles: they have nothing beyond the boastful port they put on; all behind is hollow, or corrupt. What is strong and useful may be known by its fruits.

I know not why I should be diffident of

my power to defend my own rights. No man ought to shrink from endeavouring to enforce what the law gives him: our legal rights are assumed to be secured by the provisions of the law; if they are not, do not let us be deluded by the belief that they are. Let us have the law, or prove to all the world that the law is no protection. To talk of obsolete laws, or laws which may be got rid of, on pretence of expedience, is the grossest of all insults.

I would neither ask nor desire but what the law would give me. If the law would not give me a right set up, I should be content to be without it. But if it be a question, the question can only be determined by the law. Would any one be so infatuated as to let caprice, or ignorance, or malice, or corruption, or interest, determine it? If the right depend on a question of fact, is it not notorious that it must be determined by a *sworn jury*, under the legal direction of a judge of the land? To the verdict of those twelve men, who must be so impannelled as neither to separate

nor have communication abroad, till they have pronounced that verdict, a suitor must (subject to the power of appeal in certain cases) submit; not to any other tribunal, pretended or usurped, much less to the wretched mistakes or perversions of individual officiousness, malice, or wrong-doing. It matters not what the right is; the law is the same in all, except where express statutes have taken a question of fact out of the hands of a jury. *

I have seen what it is to attend thirteen years at the bar of a *Lords' Committee of Privileges*, which is not a legal tribunal, except for questions of pure privilege; and if nothing but the delay and the expence were taken into consideration, I think any one who would voluntarily agitate a question of law or fact before it must be literally insane or stultified. But no one can rationally accuse me of speaking otherwise

* See the arguments and authorities at length, as far as regards a question of peerage, in the author's *Inquiry into the Law of Inheritance, with respect to Rights of Peerage.*

than mildly and respectfully, when I say that there are at least a few other important objections besides these; that is, if there be any validity in the reasons assigned by Blackstone and other great law-writers for the security and confidence to be placed in the justice and rectitude of a *jury*. If indeed the advantages of a jury be delusive, and the arguments always urged in its favour a chimera, then many of these objections are mere fancies and prejudices, and it is an act of mental imbecility to entertain them.

Nothing human is perfect: I have often seen great apparent mistakes, and defeats of justice, even by juries; but still, under an able and honest judge, I am thoroughly convinced that it approaches nearest to right and truth, in the investigation of facts; and nothing was ever yet contrived in human jurisprudence which contained so probable a guard against partiality and corruption.

I have no reason to doubt that this is the general sense of the English people; and

they will not be willing soon to give up a *trial by jury*, or suffer it to be trampled or infringed upon, but at the expence of their blood or their lives. It is the grand right of *Magna Charta*, as Blackstone and all our text-lawyers admit.

LETTER LIII.

12th Sept. 1824.

All this fair scene of things which daily passes before us has little interest with humanity but what the mind brings back upon it, and associates with it. The world is to us nearly what we may make it; and is as different to a dull man without imagination, and to a man of warm genius and feeling, as Lapland is from Naples. The dull man and the genius may sometimes appear, to the outward eye, of equal apathy and inactivity; while the latter experiences within the recesses of his mind unwearied movement and radiance. The virtue of the gift of genius is the virtue of nature, not of the gifted individual; but the good management of that gift is the virtue of the individual; and surely one half at least of its future benefit depends on its management.

Psychologists, I believe, differ whether there is or is not a moral sense, or conscience, an intuitive sense of right and wrong, implanted in us distinct from the other faculties of the mind: *Descartes*, if I recollect, argues that there is; and I myself have a strong persuasion of it. It soon becomes different in different people from the counteraction of will, passion, habit, intellect, and other causes. But the difficulty which impresses itself on my mind is this, — that it seems infused at our *birth* in *various degrees* of liveliness and perfection, or imperfection. This is a mystery, which I cannot fathom or reconcile; and which, therefore, it would be presumptuous for me to pursue with doubts and vain speculations. I am aware that many may deny the *fact* of an early sense of right and wrong in infants, before reason has strength to operate, and independent of imposed fear. I am myself firmly convinced that it acts more or less strongly in every human being, in whom any sense exists or remains, from early infancy to the extremity of age.

It may be very greatly obliterated by violent and habitual crime, but never entirely.

A sense of dignity or grandeur is, perhaps, a more complex and more intellectual sense than a sense of virtue. It rules over high faculties united both to a deep sensibility and a powerful moral sense; especially when it is directed not to mere grandeur of material form, but to grandeur of thought, emotion, and human action.

There is a sort of genius not connected with morality, but which only looks for its self-satisfaction in the outward applauses or rewards it gains. All its exertions are for show; and, therefore, as it has no heart or sincerity, it can never make that deep sort of impression which is the charm of primary genius. We cannot have profound respect for the men who have the ductility to turn themselves into any shape, and make themselves any thing for public favour. We admire only decided characters whose resistless genius has a dominion over them; and who love the creations in which they

deal, in solitude, and for their own sake. A man of the world, who has an entire management over himself, and is insensible to enthusiasm, may write with as much apparent splendour as he desires, yet the splendour will be all fallacious; it will strike, but not warm.

I do not think that men of the world can be poets: they may be song-writers and epigrammatists. Had Lord Byron lived the life of a man of the world he would not have written his grand poems; nor if he had so written them, would they have had the same deep interest. It is the identity of his character with his poems which is one of their many grand sources of enchantment. The same is true of the poems of Burns. Had not Collins had "a believ-" ing mind," his visionary poetry could never have been produced.

It is the absurd idea that we can be what reason, observation, and judgment might make us, which leads to such wrong expectations with regard to our habits, feelings, opinions, and conduct. If nature

does not implant the faculty and bent in us, we cannot be poets; and if it does, we cannot be men of the world. A wit is commonly a man of the world, because his field of action is placed in watching, elucidating, and exposing what lies upon the surface of human manners; but he has scarce ever any heart, any fixed opinions, or any deep judgment.

I never yet read with the smallest emotion or favour the life of any poet, who had not a character marked, peculiar, and overruling. I can forgive eccentricities occasionally perverse; I can forgive some fitful indulgences even of absurdity or folly; but I cannot forgive a cold, cautious, calculating, sneering, scornful prudence,—what is vulgarly called *shrewd sense:* it is nothing but an ungenerous, selfish, plotting, fraudulent, ambushed cunning; it never was, and never will, it cannot be, united to imagination and feeling. There are those who would have every thing treated lightly, as if it was to be admired or neglected at will or convenience; gone through with indif-

ference, as it were for fashion; and played with, in a tone and manner as if it was done by a civil condescension from secret and mysterious greatness.

If poetry be a solid fruit of the mind, if it be an imbodiment of truth, then the pleasures and feelings in which it deals cannot be inapplicable to actual life. If the images and sentiments which delight us in poetry are not such as in our hours of sober wisdom and reason we can approve and support, it is a proof that the poetry, and the enjoyment we derive from it, are not genuine. False poetry will not stand the test of the strong practical sense which society brings into action, but true poetry will. If, therefore, a poet hides in company the sort of faculty and colour of mind whence his poetry springs, it is because he finds that it will not abide this test; and therefore that his poetical character is artificial.

A poet's experience commonly lies far more in his thoughts than in his actions; what he thinks is life and reality to him.

But he who, as a poet, deals not in thoughts, but in words, only finds a lively existence either in material life, or in the technical activity of verbal construction. There are numerous persons of deep poetical feelings who are not actual poets; many writers of verses, calling themselves poets, who have no poetical feelings. Writers of verses which are much praised by the world have often no one poetical faculty, unless skill in metre can be so called. These people may be as pliant and adroit in society as the merest matter-of-fact person who never wrote a line or read a book: they have no bent, no energy, no unaccommodating feeling; they are present exclusively to the society before them, and know nothing out of it, to trouble or distract them.

Some estimate poetry so lightly, that they think, if it be bought at the expence of the smallest foible, or imprudence, or awkwardness, it is not worth having: others value it so highly, that with them it can gild great faults or even crimes. Poets have sometimes been bad men, because

their evil passions have overcome their good ones; and crime is apt to beget crime, till these criminal passions have gradually absorbed and extinguished what is virtuous: but I cannot think that it has often happened; soon after they have become habitually criminal, they cease to be poets.

There cannot be any great length and extent of good poetry, without a large mixture of powerful and grand moral feeling; and that cannot be generated in the mind of any one whose heart is in a state of confirmed vice. But the rarity of good poetry does not arise merely from the rarity of great poetical talent: it arises also from a mistake in the direction of that talent; from a mistake of the ends and means of poetry; from a non-indulgence of those native energies and native associations of ideas, which are slighted for the very reason for which they ought to be prized, — that they have not enough of art. What is merely ornamental is too much regarded; what is connected with *actual experiences*

is too fearfully handled. *Fiction* is applied to the art in the vulgar and bad, and not in the favourable sense; in which last it is not in opposition to these experiences. The imaginations of a rich mind constitute a grand part of its actual enjoyments.

It is the misapprehension or non-apprehension as to the character of a poet being an integral and specific one in real life which leads to so many affectations, disguises, false ambitions, and deviations from simplicity, frankness, and truth. Authors waste great toils and efforts in reaching meretricious splendours not worth the attainment, while they neglect excellence which might be approached with comparative ease.

LETTER LIV.

13th Sept. 1824.

A TRUE poet might, perhaps, preserve his personal influence and dignity in his intercourse with the world, if he would act firmly. The public are apt to yield to steady pretension, even when ill founded; how much more, then, when well founded! The calm confidence of elevated powers ought to bear out the indulgence of some particularities; and at the same time resist the vulgar insults of rank, honours, or riches. There are certain odious classes of society, among the rest a fluttering gaudy tribe of new nobility, with the mean, low wretches who attach themselves to them, and live upon them by the payment of vile degrading flattery; and these set themselves up with airs of importance, as if there was something greater than genius,—something

which breathed an atmosphere rarer and more dignified; and from its heights could look down upon the grand poet with pity and contempt, as one labouring with vulgar passions and habits, and not initiated into their more refined thoughts, and estimates, and modes of conduct.

I have seen such speaking and looking thus even of Lord Byron,—a man who added ancient and honourable nobility to his splendid genius, —because he scorned any intercourse with their coteries and their pettinesses. Will the most slavish bigot in favour of aristocracy and nobility, who is not quite stultified, venture to assert or to suppose that high inherited titles and vast wealth can give weight to the possessor's estimate of a poet's merit, above that of any of the other educated classes? If rank could give a man refinement of intellect, or superiority of taste, it would indeed be a glorious thing. I believe it is a trite saying, that "there is no royal road to mathema-"tics;" I am sure there is no aristocratic road to poetry. I think, however, these

idiots have held that it is vulgar to be a poet, and to have poetical feelings. They have notions of their own, too, but they are forced to keep them close locked up among themselves; for they are conscious that they will not bear the light. They look wise, too, and mysterious, as if they were exclusively among the initiated, and knew something which it would be beneath their dignity to explain. There is a multitudinous class of folly, which deems that it has nothing to do but to throw out the word "vulgar" on what it dislikes, and that then it is irrevocably condemned.

The great difficulty which a poet has in society is to calm his feelings. He is always irritable by nature; he has generally passed much of his time in solitude; he has seldom studied the minute and trifling etiquettes of common manners; and his mental habits have always a tendency to wander from what is present. There is a sort of ease which is only to be acquired by constant intercourse with polished company; for freedom and ease are quite dif-

ferent things. But without this ease a person has not a proper possession of his faculties; and then no good sense nor shrewdness will prevent his committing blunders and absurdities. The ill-regulated desire to shine, which prompts display in wrong places, is among the foibles to which a want of self-possession leads. Every man of the world sees keenly, and delights to expose this weakness, which has so strong a tendency to degrade him who falls into it.

A man conscious of great talents, and great knowlege, does not easily sit silent, while he hears subjects discussed on which he feels that he can enlighten or correct what passes; but impetuous, and unused to measure and economise his strength in conversation, he gives offence and insult, rather than instruction. A little common-place, well applied, and related calmly and quietly, runs away with all the credit from him. Then his pride and vanity are wounded; and he retires from society restless and bitter.

As soon as a genius has learned by long

usage to be as placid and easy in company as other people, he becomes a much more agreeable man; but the chances are that he has lost a great part of his poetical energy. It unfortunately happens that a mixture of discontent and indignation is one great source of poetical eloquence and pathos. It is not in society that the grand inventions and sentiments of poetry are nursed. But he who finds himself always happy and easy in society will probably not have much relish for solitude. A *bon vivant* and a wit have never, perhaps, been great poets. All grand passions want pliancy; they move with such force that they cannot be stopped or changed in a moment; but wit is always agile and adroit.

Men who live much in the world have a quicker discernment of the ridiculous than of the elevated, the beautiful, or the ingenious; it is the talent most cultivated, and which goes farthest. But this is a frightful proof of mankind's envy, jealousy, and love of degradation of each other; and thus it does not seem as if it was the ten-

dency of society to cultivate benevolence; nor even the outward appearance of it, except to those present.

A poet ought to "know his own worth;" to be simple in company, unassuming, placid, firm; to be above all vulgar rivalries and vanities; to go on in his own track, not discomposed, yet with such a gentle reserve as should keep levity in awe. Unluckily, where the passions are lively, the love of distinction is almost always too indiscriminate and insatiable. And there is such a malignant triumph in getting an advantage over genius, that where the opportunity is given, it is certain to be seized.

There is a great fear of the satire and scorn of the poet; but it is better to be feared than laughed at. It is complained that he despises the amusements of others; while he demands praise and respect for his own. But there is nothing necessarily irrational or unfair in this; theirs may be trifling, while his is honourable and dignified: they may run after follies and bubbles, while he runs after grandeur and wisdom:

his anger may not be because he envies them, but because he is indignant at them: if his anger is not at the amusement, but at the distinction conferred by excelling in it, even this may be pardonable, because it may draw away distinction from more worthy pursuits. It surely cannot be contended, that every one is equally entitled to his own amusement, without reference to its innocence, rectitude, or dignity.

LETTER LV.

14th Sept. 1824.

I HAVE continued to reserve many things from these letters from day to day, in the hope that I should in future be in a better humour to relate them; and now I touch the prescribed limits, and it is too late. I shall, perhaps, have an opportunity hereafter, in some other place, to record them. I will not harass myself with over-anxiety as to what is already written; an active and energetic mind always thinks that it could have done better than it has done.

I professed in the outset, that these letters should be miscellaneous, unconnected, and excursive; I promised that they should be frank and sincere; and I feel confident that I have kept my promise. What other value, if any, they may have, others must judge. In matters of reasoning, if just, all

must come to the same conclusions from any given premises; but in matters of opinion and sentiment there may be great variety. When men have given up their lives to literature, and to the study of the human mind, the results to which they have come will, if they are not deficient in feeling and observation, be at least curious, if not instructive and useful. To say any thing which is absolutely new; which has never been said before; yet which, when said, is admitted to be well founded and just, is a happiness which scarce any author can hope to have attained; the next thing is not to be *derivative*, or a borrower in what is written; and not to write what, though it may be true, is stale and trifling. Whatever is generated by the author's own mind is confirmatory of the opinions of others; but then it must be something of sufficient importance to want confirmation, because the world differ upon it. A book should contain either instruction or amusement, and contain it for those who can

have a choice of books, and are judges of them.

The force of the matter should depend on its general truth, independent of adventitious piquancy or interest. There is a sort of spirit, or wit, or humour, bred among particular classes, at a particular place and period, and which is unintelligible to the rest of the world; this, which is contemptible in itself, and dies with the occasion, is yet considered to have superiority of excellence by those among whom it is produced, and to whom it is addressed.

Some men have a warmth and felicity of expression which gives energy and novelty even to common thoughts; and after their impulse had been supposed to be entirely worn out, revives all their strength. This can only arise from their being new creations in the author's mind, though similar to such as had been created by others a thousand times already. Nothing is more useful than to give novelty to what has lost its force, not because it is unimportant, but only because it is stale.

There are very few books which contain matter applicable to any subject but that on which they treat; that is, which generalise. It requires small powers to venture a particular opinion in a particular case; and no works contain essence of thought, of which any part cannot be detached without destroying its force.

What I should have had the ambition to have done, if I had had the power to effect it, would have been a work which would afford perpetual funds for citation; which would often come in aid of men's opinions and sentiments, from the truth of the passages, and the force with which they were expressed. It is easy to write things common in themselves, but which do very well in the combination in which the author introduces them, and which contain nothing worthy of being cited for any other purpose than that for which the author composed them; for in fact they have nothing in them peculiar to the author, except their own identical combination.

LETTER LVI.

15th Sept. 1824.

An accidental interruption shortened my letter of yesterday; but I shall not resume the subject of it. Each day commonly produces its own impressions; how they are effected on one whose time at present passes with little variety and little intercourse of conversation, may seem strange to some persons. But a single word or hint, or even tone or look, often leads into a long train of new ideas; and one gathers from the apparent opinions or prejudices of others something fresh to reflect upon. When a man has past the age of sixty, the period has surely arrived when he ought to be calm at encountering an inconformity of the thoughts of others with his own. Indeed the generality of people do not think; their minds are employed in money-

getting, which can scarcely be called an employment of thinking, — and they have leisure for little else. The society of England, in all its functions, and especially in its upper departments, appears to be at present in a fearful state. There is little ability, and a general disrespect and contempt for it, which is a dangerons symptom.

There are some men on whom first impressions are too violent, and who are, therefore, accused of want of judgment. This accusation does not seem to be strictly founded; want of judgment is caused by want of discrimination; but this is rather produced by want of reserve, and of time for the impression to become cool; there is no want of discrimination; on the contrary, the discrimination is too acute.

The estimation and measure of talents, as well as of genius, abstractedly, is not difficult; the difficulty is to estimate their exact power in practical operation; because *there* the passions and temper, and even habits, intervene, to disturb their simple processes and detached success. A man of

great talents, therefore, is very often a man not practically effective, because these adventitious obstacles defeat their operation. Still there are occasions on which his faculties may work with great use, and be found exceedingly important in their results. It is the fashion to consider the only proof of talents to lie in their fitness and adroitness when practically applied; I cannot but consider this to be an opinion of gross and contemptible stupidity.

I am so far from thinking, after long and increased experience, that the intellectual faculties are more nearly equal than at first appeared, that I continue to see the immense difference between them, more and more strongly. The contrary idea seems much built on the observance of the powerful effects of industry and perseverance, in the attainment of acquired knowledge. But this acquired knowledge, in which such success takes place, is *almost* always, perhaps always, a technical knowledge. What is done by genius or talent is quite different, and is something which mere

industry and perseverance can never reach. This arises from that part of the intellectual faculties which I contend to be in-born and intuitive. Were it otherwise, there would be no such thing as positive mental power; but the last generation would always supersede the former.

I make myself easy on that head; the excellence of what is done by art and labour is liable to fluctuate every day; but there is something in original gift, which, though perhaps indefinable, will always make itself felt by some nameless charm or force. It may defy all rules, and be wrong by them all; but still it will have vitality.

Books written in this last spirit are only to be found here and there, and are not produced but at intervals; they are not much valued by those who look only to the supply of mental food of mere necessity; but there are others who are lifted above this state, and require luxuries of the mind, as well as material luxuries; and by these such books are keenly demanded and duly

prized. They bring us into a new region and higher class of existence.

It is contended, however, by many that this is not the case; that such are only fantastic and imaginary merits; that that is best which is most regular, most methodically finished; and of which the excellences can be most palpably analysed. And these persons must be left to their own opinions; appeal would be vain; for appeal must be made to faculties and experiences which they do not acknowledge.

LETTER LVII.

16th Sept. 1824.

It will be apparent, that in my three or four last letters I have not been in my usual state of mind; the fact is, that I have been disturbed by private business, which creates a temporary anxiety and irritation uncongenial to literature. My sleep also has been more unsound than usual; and I have thought in the night with too much confusion to remember in the morning any part of what has passed.

It is useless to fret one's self about approval or censure; when an author acts strenuously and with good intention, he should expect and bear the result with calmness. He especially, who has spoken freely of modern criticism, must expect its resentment, and, perhaps, without much regard to justice or candour.

I have often spoken of myself in these letters, because *self-knowledge* is professed in the title of them to be one of the subjects treated: many will reject such a subject as inadmissible; but they who entertain it will probably think that I have said too little, rather than too much on it. I consider *Montaigne's Essays*, with all their faults, to be one of the golden books of literature: they are almost all about himself, his own opinions, sentiments, speculations, and habits. They have, indeed, a *naïveté*, which perhaps has never been imitated with perfect success. The second, I think, in any new walk is always inferior to the first; he cannot be entirely free from servility.

One great and scarcely pardonable defect of all but the very smallest number of books is,—want of sincerity and frankness. Writers seem afraid to trust their own opinions to the public eye: they do not tell, therefore, what they privately think. When this is the case, they are unfit to be authors: if they do not feel that their own opinions will bear the light, what pretence have they

to address the public? But the cause of this rarity probably is, that very few are capable of forming original opinions, the result of thought; what they call opinions, are something more in the nature of *will* than *opinion;* and these they know to be too capricious and uncertain to enable them to rely upon them in the face of the public.

We estimate characters according to the view we take of their internal movements; of the soul that actuates them; of their feelings, motives, reasonings, and judgments. These constitute their moral being, which is that in which we feel the strongest interest and sympathy. If biography or fiction does not elucidate the characters it undertakes to present, in these features, it neither conveys instruction, nor any pleasure which taste can approve. I do not wonder that common works both of biography and fiction are deficient in these essentials, because it requires imagination, sensibility, and eloquence, as well as sagacity and shrewd observation, to delineate

them. Attention to the same points is requisite in criticism, at least on all good poetry, and the parts of literature approaching nearest to it; and the same powers and accomplishments, therefore, must be found in the critic.

No biographer or critic is qualified to treat duly of a poet, with whom he has not a strong congeniality of spirit. Without this he cannot identify himself with him, and paint those intellectual traits that an enlightened reader chiefly seeks. Dull readers, indeed, who have no imagination or reflection, demand only facts: they want a story full of incidents; they cannot embody or apply sentiments or opinions; they can only comprehend that which is described in action. So I have heard slow, plain minded men, when beset with theories and arguments, cry, "Let us see how they "work."

The truth is, that mere facts instruct us very little in character; the *same* facts have every *variety* of result on differently constituted minds. A poet's character may

lead to a given course of events, but it cannot mainly be caused by them. There are those who hold that a man may be what he chooses to be; and, therefore, when they set up an hero, make him what they think he ought to be. Biographers of this sort commonly write stiff, uninstructive, though, perhaps, highly ornamented and pointed memoirs; they may, perhaps, be men of the world, and thus think that all those sensibilities, whence genuine poetry flows, are weaknesses, and ought to be concealed. Wits of this artificial temperament deem themselves superior to that feebleness of spirit which is affected by what they call vulgar mortifications, desires, and prejudices. But a poet is so far from being elevated above our general nature, that he is the representative or reflector of all sensibilities which are justified by the laws of our being.

I doubt, if a decided poet was ever content, without having obtained an acknowledgment of his superiority. I cannot reason on this passion for superiority; it

often happens, that no palpably beneficial results can be expected from it, yet the passion is irresistibly implanted in us. Men grow complacent when it is admitted; they are feverish, restless, and bitter, if it be resisted or unattended to.

But, in fact, men are not estimated according to their merits intellectual, any more than moral. Genius is often neglected or unacknowledged; and false pretensions are very frequently crowned with distinction and honour. Malice combined with power, or sly intrigue instigated by envy or jealousy, very commonly by its intervention defeats just claims; and authority undeservedly acquired often throws a cloud upon them through ignorance or bad taste. Fashion also and whim have great influence; or, perhaps, the prevalence of some temporary prejudice. But yet we rarely see high mental gifts remain quiet under injustice. They are almost always ambitious; and they exhibit, moreover, marks, which no observer, in any degree attentive, can miss.

LETTER LVIII.

17th Sept. 1824.

I CANNOT too often repeat, that the nature of *invention* in poetry is very little understood by the generality of readers, or even critics. It is quite impossible that it can be merely a reflection, however bright, of impressions made on the fancy by external images. There must be a novelty of combination made by the intellectual faculty, which unites itself into a new whole. But the true and strict nature of poetical invention is this: *A creation of an image or images, drawn from the materials of the fancy, by which an embodied illustration of an abstract truth is presented to the mind.* This is the primary essential; there are others subordinate, but essential also. *The truth must be an important truth; and the image or images embodied must be grand,*

or pathetic, or beautiful. I need not add, that they must have *verisimility;* for that is included in the words already used.

I contend, that all poetry ought to be tried by this test; and that it must be placed high in the scale, in proportion as these requisites are fulfilled. If *invention* be not its primary characteristic, it cannot be strict poetry. But there is a secondary or minor invention, which consists not of the abstract truth put into action or embodied; but merely of the adventitious dress or ornament in which it is presented; that is, of the figurative style of the language. Here the invention is *not intrinsic* and substantial, but merely *superficial* and in semblance.

I am aware that this will exclude a vast quantity which is now received as poetry; and degrade into a lower scale another large quantity which is now considered as primary. But I feel confident that no one can successfully impugn this definition. We thus know how to treat all that numerous class of verses, which consist of shrewd and

just *observations on life and manners*, on which there have been such critical conflicts in the discussion of the merits of POPE. They are not poetry in themselves, for they have *no invention;* and they cannot be made even secondary poetry, but by the richness and good taste of the metaphorical language in which they are conveyed. Of this secondary merit, many passages of Pope's *ethical* productions possess the highest degree; but blind prejudice and bigotry only can deny, that there are whole intervening pages in succession, of these same works, which have not one ingredient of poetry in them, but the metre.

But if fancy is not sufficient without invention, what ought to become of that still more numerous class of versifiers, who write only from *memory;* that is, from the borrowed or derivative mental impressions, obtained at second hand from the communication of preceding writers.

Perhaps it will be observed, that if there must be a tale invented for the embodiment of every truth, the conveyance of a *few*

truths will become very voluminous. But there may be thousands of truths illustrated by a series of detached embodiments, which may all form part of a suit of actions woven into one story.

What I insist on is *invention;* invention *embodying* the thought, or invention *decorating* it, if already embodied.

A question may here arise, how far the association of what is spiritual,—that is, sentiment and thought, with the impression actually received from external objects,—can constitute *poetical invention.* I think that in strictness it cannot, because it cannot be said to be an *embodiment;* but by a little licence, it may at least be extended to all such spiritualities of this kind as are associated to *invented* images.

I am aware of the remark which the doctrines here advocated will probably draw forth. The cry will be, "Wherefore all "this argument to establish a subtle dis- "tinction? Why not observation and ex- "perience? Are they not more useful and "more sure than invention?" They may be

so, though I do not think that they are; but that is no reason for calling things by false names. To prove that *observation* and *experience* are more *useful than* invention, will not prove them to be *invention*. But *poetry* must, *ex vi termini*, be *invention*; therefore, matter of observation and experience cannot be poetry. Readers may, if they will, like something else better than poetry; but they must not, therefore, call it poetry.

Observation and experience may be necessary to controul the track of invention, and give it *verisimility*. So far they are useful, and even necessary to a poet; because the illustration of *truth* is the *end* which he proposes, or ought to propose to himself; and the invention by which he effects it ought to keep within the rules of probability. And this can only be done by the aid of knowledge.

LETTER LIX.

18th Sept. 1824.

A SHREWD observer of life sees every day more plainly, that the civility and respect of the world are not dispensed according either to native gift or acquired merit. Disguise, reserve, cunning, artifice, trick, and fraud, prevail over simplicity, frankness, and plain dealing. But, of all things, reserve and disguise under the mask of an open countenance have the best chance; the world is not good enough, and has not enough strength and directness of understanding, to receive with confidence, interest, and sympathy, what is pure and open. All the race lies between the manœuverers, intriguers, and pretenders.

All that is thus true of society in general is especially true of *coteries*, and what is pitifully called, in England, *the world of fashion*. To define or analyse of what that little world consists is an utter impossibility,

Its materials are so heterogeneous, whimsical, and irregular, that the very supposition of its existing by any principle is absurd. We know what it affects: it affects to consist of persons of the highest rank, birth, and wealth, who therefore are entitled to give the *ton* by the elegance of their manners, accomplishments, and habits. But, in fact, all who are acquainted with the world can prove that it does not answer *any one* of these ingredients. It has, perhaps, some persons of the higher titles of nobility mixed up with it; but these very sparingly; and even then *almost* always of equivocal origin and character; and, without exception, of frivolous minds; all the rest are the bubbles of forward and usurping vanity, blown up by foolish arrogance and an unfeeling desire of distinction, hardened in its outset to all rebuffs.

These little puffed-up parties, which throw round themselves such a mysterious consequence, and obtain such an unfounded influence over the light-headed multitude, who stare and wonder without examining,

do not gain their superiority without a great deal of finesse, management, and intrigue. They have their petty cabinets in which they exercise as much diplomacy, mean contrivance, and duplicity, as the politicians who govern states. They also call in the aid of political faction; which, in return, while it despises them, calls on *them* for its own purposes. I have heard of a silly countess thus made the head, that she might draw in the young, the light, the vain, and the weak.

There is, probably, no capital in the world where all this has been so much played off as in London; and there are many reasons for it, arising from its extraordinary size, its mixed manners, and still more mixed population. No where else is wealth so suddenly acquired; does it fluctuate so much; or has it so much influence: no where else are ranks so little marked, and men so little traced and contrasted from one situation to another. Even he who attends his warehouse, or retail-shop in *Wapping*, of a morning, gives a splendid

dinner or assembly in a fine house in a western square of an evening, or drives out in a beautiful equipage with all its due accompaniments of servants and horses, without a suspicion that he is the same person. Money will do every thing; the extreme vulgarity of his language and ideas, which cannot be shaken off, will be passed quite unnoticed in the highest company; and if it is thought that he can give his daughter fifty or sixty thousand pounds, a distressed duke will not hesitate to marry her.

As, therefore, there is nothing in meanness of birth, manners, occupation, and character, which will keep a man out of leading society, he who is the greatest intriguer, and has the strongest stimulus to undergo the pain of servility, and various other disagreeable and degrading sacrifices, is the best qualified, and most likely to succeed, as an aspirant in the circles of fashion. There must always be a certain sprinkling of title and rank; but these are easily had among the more frivolous and trifling members of the very multiplied modern and

mongrel nobility; and there will always be some stray fools from the highest, to disgrace their cast.

The low aspirant, though best qualified to succeed finally, will not gain a bloodless victory. It must be a task of long perseverance, and many rubs and wounds. He must patiently, and with apparent indifference, endure a long series of provocations and insults; he must be obsequious, active, profuse, ostentatious, a slave to forms and etiquettes, reserved, mysterious, cunning, affected, and false. A long service of this kind will at length accustom those to him on whom he has fixed himself; they will then submit, partly by habit and partly by necessity, to have him among them on terms of nearer equality. From that day he shares the influence of the cast over the uninitiated; and his tyranny is exercised in proportion to the cost of his power.

Almost all the great families, — at least all the manly and dignified members of them, — all persons of true genius or talent, — all

who are engaged in solid occupations,—all who are employed in matters of state or legislation,—all pursuing grave literature,—all seriously addicted to grave and honourable professions,—keep aloof from these most contemptible trickeries of distinction. Temporary recruits are sometimes found from weak young men of good provincial families with good fortunes: but they almost always retire in disgust after the first vanities of youth are over;—sometimes, perhaps, with the inalienable incumbrance of a cast-off Lady Betty, or Lady Jane, who has outstood the market among her titled companions.

It is true, that there are little wits and poetasters, who join themselves to these societies; and who think that what they say and write is to have a great additional value because they have been so admitted. And so it will have among those *coteries*, and this too will be extended a little beyond themselves; but it is all hollow, as themselves are; and will soon die, and be forgotten. I wonder these men have not

too much pride, thus to be made tools of, and treated like mountebanks or conjurers.

Though money will do every thing in England, as to introduction and respect in society, it will not do it without the aid of a forward, intruding, unfeeling temper, and a great deal of arrogance, vanity, and pretension. To make it all a jumble of contradictions, aristocratical pride and insolence prevails at present more than ever; but while it is thus offensive to the meek and unpretending, it submits with incredible meanness to upstart riches and brass-faced intriguing adventurers; so that society at once incurs the opposite evils of aristocratic pride, new wealth, and impudent adventure, without the good of any of them. England is, at present, extraordinarily pressed by the irritable inconveniences of an illegitimate nobility; —I mean a nobility not standing on the true basis of such a privileged order. It may be said, that they are far more numerous in other countries of Europe; but *there* they are merely *titular*, except the modern institu-

tion of *peers*, which form a very small portion of the nobles in France. The union with Ireland has, in this respect, been a terrible blow on the English gentry. It has introduced twenty-five Irish peers into the English House of Lords, besides the twenty-eight representative peers; and this has led to the introduction of thirteen additional Scotch peers. The total number created in this time has been about sixty-four; of which, therefore, thirty-eight have been Scotch and Irish peers, leaving only twenty-six as new nobles.

It must be recollected, that in this case these additions from the peerages of Ireland and Scotland bring totally new interests to England, both in its legislation and in its tribunals of justice. They are not, therefore, mere matters of empty title.

All these things show the frail and incoherent condition of the present state of society in England, and how empty the airs and pretensions of *fashion* are at this crisis even beyond all other periods. All know that there are divisions and subdivi-

sions among these petty *coteries*; but they are all so contemptible, that I am unable to make any distinction between them. I sometimes hear one affecting to throw its sarcasms at another; but if there be any thing in the sarcasm, it is only a weapon furnished against itself. So I heard it said with a sneer, that the world of fashion with which a noble departed poet once associated for a little while, and then fled from in disgust, was not the *proper* world of fashion! I will allow it to have been as contemptible as sneers and sarcasms could make it: but then how was that which was pretended to be set over it a whit better? Equally trivial, affected, and fantastical; I cannot in that case count a degree or two in mere blood, or date of title, if such there were! Nor can I measure the more cautious and milk-and-water immoralities of the ..... against the less cautious and more plebeian ones of the .....! — Both adopt the principle of obtaining notoriety and distinction by illegitimate and foolish means; and as neither of them rely on

solid qualities for the attainment of respect, but both on the abuse of the station in which their lot had placed them, the scorn of one for the other becomes ludicrous.

LETTER LX.

19th Sept. 1824.

THERE are those who still think that fine poetry may be produced without any sincerity, on the poet's part, of the sentiments and feelings represented as his own. I have examined this question in my mind with a good deal of anxiety and strictness, and the result is, that I cannot bring myself to believe it. I can easily believe that a poet's actions may not always be conformable to his better feelings. It is as repugnant to my head as to my heart, to admit a distinction between truth in speculation and truth in practice; between wisdom, knowledge, and beauty in books, and wisdom, knowledge, and beauty in life. I do not love a *public* admission, with a denial *in a whisper*, and *aside!* This would be to make literature a mere matter of *parade;*

only for talk and show, and not for *conviction.*

I look to literature to teach lessons, not of fanciful ornament, but of deep wisdom; to let us into the secrets of the nature of man, and more especially of his spiritual being: but if it deals only in beautiful delusions; if it represents imaginings which have no verisimility; then of course all its use and dignity, and much of its attraction, is gone. We cannot be cast into the world, to be made happy only by error. If it be error it will not be fair, however plausible it may seem; there is no permanent and pure beauty but in truth.

The greater part of literature, especially of what is called poetry and fiction, is a multiplication of gaudy but half-meaning words, which augments the confusion of ideas; and only amuses by causing a blind stir of the mind which sets the faculties in motion without leading to any end. But this is false literature, for the very reason that there is no sincerity and conviction in the author. And there can be no other tie

upon an author than this. This is the great test: if we deny the sincerity, we must at least suspect the beauty and truth of the sentiment or thought.

How far action is disposed to follow conviction, would open to a very long and subtle discussion. I am inclined to think that it does generally follow actual and positive conviction, unless will is totally distinct from conviction, which I believe it is not.

Judging by common conversation and common criticism, literature is nothing but a play of chicanery and deception: of which the surface and private intentions are always in a state of contradiction, and where the secret history always gives a result opposite to that which has been exhibited to the public. But if the love of truth and wisdom be not the spur that impels the author's spirit; if he produces specious, and only specious, fruit, merely to gratify his own little vanity, or mean thirst of lucre; then the dignity of the pursuit is degraded into a petty and trifling occupation, in

which there is labour without pleasure, and severity and dulness without use.

If the chosen parts of mankind are not such as noble poets represent them, or do not approximate to these merits, then I think a grand poem is but a grand folly! a gilded toy, which it weakens the mind to play with! All sorts of delusion are sure to give more pain than satisfaction: the impulse ebbs and declines in proportion to its force; and languor, disappointment, and discomfort follow: but truth is steady; it is the same in all lights, and all humours; it defies ridicule, and overawes caprice; it asks no favour; it requires no indulgence; it spurns all management and artifice: it is manly, direct, careless, and unbending.

They who think artifice necessary, are persons who have no internal consciousness of what is sublime, pathetic, or beautiful, in sentiment, imagery, or thought; and the reverse of this is equally true. The former suppose that grand and virtuous feeling is only assumed; and, therefore, that it can be best represented by art. He, who is

under the dominion of simple and unfactitious impressions, does not go a step beyond the language which is necessary to convey the thought; for the thought is *all* with him, and thus he proves his sincerity; and that the matter which he puts forth is but the reflection of positive intellectual existences.

The mass of authors are cold, faint, and affected; they have nothing new, nor interesting, nor even correct: from them we must expect every thing in character and pretension which is deceptive; nor must even venture to infer any of their own personal qualities from their writings.

LETTER LXI.

20th Sept. 1824.

I HAVE for some time, nearly, I believe, for two years, lost the habit or power of reading, which was a grand passion of my life: but on Saturday I accidentally took up a book lying on the table, which had been obtained from one of the libraries at Geneva, entitled *The Trials of Margaret Lyndsay*. I have read it about half through; and though the grand test is yet to come in the manner of conducting the other half, so far I have been very much affected and enchanted by it. It is written, I presume, by a Scotch poet of some celebrity; but I am six years behind in the incidents of British literature, for a few English books only reach us at this distance. It at any rate could not be written by any one but a true poet, for all its descriptions are ge-

nuine poetry of a high cast. It is one of those few happy productions, which has left a thrill upon one's frame, that seems to change one's nature, and give new lights to the face of things around one. It has a decided originality; perhaps it has more elegance and gentle tenderness than force; and I am afraid that it now and then a little approaches to affectation in a few of its sentiments, and a sort of over-labour of pious reflection; but what touches me is the exquisite and tender delicacy of the descriptions, which are at the same time rich and brilliant; and a sweetness of moral pathos in *many passages*, which does not outstep nature, but enchains the reader by its deep simplicity. The delight of the *suburban* walks to those emerging from crowded streets, so beautifully touched by Milton, in the passage beginning

"As one, who long in populous city pent," &c.

is dwelt upon by the present author with a brilliance of inventive fidelity which is at once new and perfect. The visit to the

native cottages of *Braehead* from "the "narrow lane and gloomy court," (see chapters xiv. and xv. &c.) will continue to be read by readers of sensibility and taste while the language lasts. There is no charm so thrilling, so profound and permanent, as the embodying these pure and native images in association, with such virtuous and simple impressions of the heart and mind; it is one of the offices in which genius is most usefully and appropriately employed. I suppose that this work is stealing its *silent way* into eternity; for if it is finished as it is begun, it deserves it; but it shows how "noiseless" true merit often is.

And now I must look round, and prepare for my own *exit:* — one more letter, and I have done. I shall have filled my allotted space, and can claim no more. When I approach a close, I always think that I might have done much better than I have done; and I suppose that most sensitive minds think the same. I have omitted a great deal, and have not been so bold and

open as I intended to be. I believe that my spirits have for a month past been languid, and my mind flat and sterile. I am about to move with my family after a three years' residence; and though I love locomotion, and change of air and scenery, still the expected trouble of the first effort oppresses my spirits, and breaks in upon my habits. I shall no longer be able to perform my morning task, and my industry may suffer an interruption, which may never perhaps be resumed. Nor have we fixed whither we are going; a southern and warm climate seems at present the strongest attraction: perhaps *Nice*, *Genoa*, or even *Naples* again. I have no reason to love England, she has not been a kind and just mother to me! — and as to the alliances of blood, when removed from the first degree, they commonly do more harm than good. But this is an ungrateful subject, and I will abstain.

I cannot save myself from those bitternesses and calumnies, and that warfare of incessant hostilities, which the literary world

are now carrying on against each other with such utter dishonesty, baseness, and disregard of all ties of decency, and common gentlemanly feelings. They are like two hired gladiators hacking and hewing each other to pieces, that they may get a little paltry money from the multitude, who have such a savage delight in beholding the bloodshed and the torture, that it draws the gold from those barbarous pockets from which scarce any other exertion of literature would draw a *centime*.

This is a kind of sport for the mob which it does not require much ingenuity to produce. Every one may wield with effect a scalping-knife or tomahawk. What could be more easy than to write a long plausible critical article on the *Paradise Lost*, were it now first published, making it out to be a dull, stupid, prosing, harsh, unintelligible, attempt at putting fragments of the sacred writings into a crude form of measured syllables, miscalled metre, in a style of barbarous roughness, without a spark of imagination, or true native eloquence; and

therefore, to be any thing but poetry? I firmly believe, that if such a poem could now come out, it would be actually so treated by many of the critics; and I am still more sure, that if it was so treated, the criticism would have more partisans than opponents; and that it would carry the opinions of the multitude with it.

It is a favourite maxim instilled by the same spirit of hostility which tends to confound all distinctions, that real merit cannot be injured or degraded by unjust criticism. This is as absurd as that false and insidious doctrine which holds that the mob, if left to itself, will always be governed by *reason*. It assumes that common readers can distinguish between good and bad criticism; that they can detect false quotations and partial extracts; and that they are enlightened enough to refuse to consider ridicule as the test of truth. Johnson says, in his Life of *Akenside*, "If ridicule be applied to "any position as the test of truth, it will "then become a question, whether such "ridicule be just; and this can only be

" decided by the application of truth as the " test of ridicule." But the mob know nothing of this. Even Akenside (says Johnson) " adopted Shaftesbury's foolish asser- " tion of the efficacy of ridicule for the " discovery of truth."

LETTER LXII.

21st Sept. 1824.

I HAVE now completed four months since the commencement of the first series of my letters,—the letters on Lord Byron, of which the commencing date was *22d May*. Here I have promised to close, and I shall keep my word; but I would have made my last letter a long one if circumstances had permitted; private avocations, however, quite inopportune, necessitate it to be brief and hasty. Perhaps I ought to have called these letters *A short Diary of Thoughts and Sentiments;* whatever they be, if they have any value in themselves, the title will little signify. The great difficulty lies in fairly and candidly appreciating *value*. I cannot enter into any literary conversations wherever I go, without encountering such a variety of standards and tastes, that it would

seem as if there were no principles, but that all was caprice and chance.

But there are certain things in which the wise have agreed at all times in defiance of temporary fashion; and these are what sound literature ought to deal with. All that fashion for the most part affects, is a temporary form of workmanship, without much regard to the metal; — like new plate from the silversmith's, laboured into the most modern shape which prevails, without any regard to the baseness of the material, even though pure and massy ore of an antiquated manufacture has been sacrificed for it.

I, for one, care very little about the form, whether it be obsolete, or fashionable, or anomalous, and of an irregularity peculiar to itself. The point at issue ought to be, whether the substance is *true?* and whether that truth has the merit of originality and importance, or is stale and trivial? for a *truth*, which is stale and trivial, is not sufficient.

Perhaps the first point will be denied me; and where this cannot be, the attack will be upon the second. But if nobody is to succeed, or to write, who cannot be free from objectors, no book must be written. To object is the delight and glory of the dull, the envious, the malignant, and the mercenary. How many critics are there who live upon the sale of their bile? Objection is the spirit of the age; every thing is cavil; and the public have been taught a sort of technical adroitness at it. They are probably the breeders of their own punishment; for the poison which they nourish for others eats up their own hearts. I would not be in the habit

"To wonder with a foolish face of praise;"

but still there is something ungenerous and base in this perpetual desire to degrade and find fault.

The greatest number of truths in a small compass can perhaps be thrown out detachedly or abruptly. Long methodical disquisitions, pursued in a regular chain of

argument, must be mainly connected by a vast proportion of trite manner; and it requires the extent of many volumes to travel over a narrow space of topics. When essences only are regarded, one of great weight may be compressed into a few hundred pages. But technical scholars and critics can only get at things mechanically; they have no mirror in their own minds to recognise intuitive truths.

I have little regard for that which has no value out of the book and collocation in which it is produced; it cannot have any thing of essence in it. As to originality, I need not repeat what I have said in many parts of these letters, and elsewhere; and as to what is trivial, the decision will vary according to the qualities and caprice of him who undertakes to sit in judgment. All *sentiment* appears trivial to many hard, coarse, plodding minds; all imagery to others: they cry with a blind arrogance, "Give us reason and strong common sense." Some think every thing trivial but the popular topics of the day; some value no

lessons but such as teach the way to get rich; others how to climb high; and others how to become fashionable. Some think simplicity and frankness trivial; and some, the attempt to trace the nice and evanescent movements of the mind.

It is clear, that the principles of poetry, the developement and distinction of the intellectual faculties and their finer movements, the sentiments which soften and exalt the heart, those visions of imagination which warm, encourage, and satisfy the higher powers of our being, the state of Europe, the comparison of countries, the operation of manners, the characters of celebrated individuals, the tendencies of literature, and topics of morals which often harass our thoughts in daily life, must all be the reverse of trivial, if properly treated. The mode of treatment is a question which it requires minds cultivated, honest, and of native rectitude, to decide. Some may deem that an author treats his subject trivially when he omits things which it would, in truth, be trivial to add; so that their

objection is the result of their own ignorance. Some may think things stale, because they are too dull to perceive the nice distinction which constitutes the novelty. All that deals in temporary topics, performed by moderate abilities, industriously exerted, well applied, and skilfully directed, may be tried by technical rules, because its interest depends on what is artificial and adventitious. The dictates of real genius will find their way at last, and be permanently valued in whatever form they may be thrown out, because they are made up of sterling ore.

It cannot be expected of any author to deal in much that is positively new; it is sufficient if it be not borrowed; if it be well expressed; if the subject be interesting; if it be just; and if it be not rendered hacknied and satiating by the common treatment of former writers. Thousands of things have been said in wise and well-known books, which are yet not so familiar to the public as to render their recognition or confirmation useless. If nothing was permitted to be said, which had been said

before, what author of the last four centuries could stand?

Opinions and sentiments which come with sincerity and without any compromise from a cultivated mind of clear integrity, are worth all the plausibly-argued disquisitions which subtle ingenuity can weave. What Johnson says of lessons at school is true of all life: "Those authors are to be "read at schools," says he, "that supply "most axioms of prudence, most princi- "ples of moral truth, and most materials "for conversation; and these purposes are "best served by poets, orators, and histo- "rians."—"A man's moral and prudential "character immediately appears in so- "ciety." *

* Life of Milton.

SUPPLEMENTAL LETTERS.

LETTER I.

Lyons, 28th Oct. 1824.

On the 24th instant, a little after mid-day, we quitted Geneva, where we had resided three years and a half, wanting twelve days, since our return from Italy. It requires some exertion to leave a place in which a permanent abode had contracted habits, occupations, and acquaintance, not interrupted without some pain. But much of the benefit of a foreign residence is lost by remaining always in the same place; variety is one of the pleasures and advantages sought by travel; and a stranger, perhaps, is received best as long as he remains a *stranger*.

It would be quite superfluous to describe the manners or the localities of *Geneva.* Perhaps no place on the Continent is so familiar to the English, and none where English society is more concentrated, and on better terms; none where there is a more constant fluctuation; and none through which so many distinguished families and individuals constantly pass. The names of the families which hold the sway in this republic are still chiefly those which took the lead soon after the establishment of its independence three hundred years ago; and they are not a little tenacious of their position, and keep aloof from those newly established with a good deal of haughtiness. As to literature, the dry parts of philosophy are more enjoyed here than works of imagination and the *belles lettres;* and all their English, and all their taste for what is called English, has been principally learned at *Edinburgh.* Yet they possess men of great merit in general literature, such as *Sismondi, Bonstetten* (a Bernois noble), &c. &c. Monsieur Simonde has

described the Genevan manners with an asperity and raillery which has given some offence.

The distance from Geneva to Lyons is twenty posts and a half, or forty-one leagues. Of these the first twenty-five leagues, as far as Cerdon, are between mountains, or along their sides, singularly picturesque, romantic, and magnificent. We slept at *Bellegarde*, at a distance of eleven leagues. Here is the celebrated *Perte du Rhône*. A little wooden bridge over the river here parts France from Savoy. It is here that the Rhone, which has hitherto been of a majestic width, contracts itself between rocks into a span. The road commences with the Jura on the right, till the chain of mountains winding in front, and pointing to Savoy, is broken by a mighty gulf, as if to leave a passage, through which the route is conducted. After this transit mountains rise on both flanks, of which the traveller winds along the sides, with fearful precipices beneath him, sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left.

"On the 25th we arrived, at noon, at *Nantua*, a little town, most beautifully placed on the borders of a lake, in the bosom of the mountains. Its population is about 3000. It grew dark as we reached *Cerdon;* and at night we slept at *Pont d'Ain.* On the height above is an ancient château, formerly belonging to the princely house of Savoy. This was formerly the route from Paris to Italy..

October 26th. — We passed by *Bublanne* to *Meximieux*, a little town of *La Bresse*, of a population of 1700, to *Montluel*, another little town of 3600, where we dined. At half-past six, P. M., we reached Lyons, having travelled with *voiturier* horses to a heavy French-built chariot and Genevan calash. The first part of this route is as picturesque and grand in mountain-scenery as any I have seen in Italy, Savoy, or such parts of Switzerland as I have visited.

Lyons is the second city in France in size, buildings, population, and commerce. We visited the public library, which is a

magnificent building on the banks of the Rhone, and contains, as we were told, 120,000 volumes. It was formerly a monastery of the Jesuits. M. *Delandine*, a celebrated *savant*, had the conduct of this library till his death in 1820, and was succeeded by his son, Vice-President of the Tribunal of Justice. We also visited the *Palace of Arts*, in the *Place de Terreaux*, formerly a convent of religious of the order of St. Bene't; the females of noble families. The building was erected in the 17th century, from the designs of M. de la Valfinière, a gentleman of Avignon. Round the grand court are ranged fragments of Roman antiquities, funeral urns, inscriptions, &c. dug up in the vicinage during the Revolution. In a grand gallery above is a collection of pictures, made principally by Napoleon; but which continues every day to be augmented by the magistracy. The number of pictures is about 132. The finest is the *Ascension*, by Pietro Perugino, formerly in the *Musée* of Paris (No. 1097.), given by the late Pope, Pius VII., to the

city of Lyons, in acknowledgment of the attachment shown to his sacred person in his passages through it. Here is also a very splendid picture of Rubens,—the *Adoration of the wise Men to the Infant Jesus.*

The *Hôtel de Ville,* in the *Place des Terreaux,* is one of the handsomest in Europe, and rivals that of Amsterdam. The cathedral is a fine Gothic building, partly as old as St. Louis, but not very large.

The *Place des Terreaux* is a magnificent square, rendered painfully renowned by the criminal executions which took place here in the Revolution, when 1500 victims were immolated to the usurped tribunals after the siege of this city. But I must recollect that I am not writing a *Guide,* or *Topographical Description.*

On Tuesday, 26th October, 1819, we reached *Florence;* on Tuesday, 26th October, 1824, we reached *Lyons.* In that awful interval of five years, what important events to my private life and affairs have I experienced; what anxieties, and sorrows, and misfortunes, have I undergone. Whether

I have added any thing valuable to my knowledge I cannot be confident; after *fifty-seven* the intellect does not improve. Perhaps I have forgot more than I have learned; but certainly I have acquired many new details; and I do not think that my industry has very much relaxed, though it has taken a different course, and a new form of discipline. The acquirement of new views of the human character so late in life can scarcely be expected; yet I suspect, that as my intercourse and experience have still enlarged, I have not been entirely unsuccessful in this sort of advancement. There are some associations of infancy and early life which it is desirable to retain; but there are very many of which the riddance is absolutely necessary to the culture of a great mind; and, unfortunately, minds of the greatest sensibility (and the sensibility is always in proportion to the genius) are most liable to these associations, so necessary to be untied. There are fears, and subjections, and morbid impressions, which nothing less

than violence and strength, the result of novelty and striking change, can overcome. Men of deep intellects and susceptible hearts have more to regret than to review with pleasure in their past lives; and, perhaps, cannot recover their fortitude, or self-complacence, in places where they have once experienced great disappointments or mortifications.

He who has leisurely and calmly seen many countries, and the manners of many people, *must* have enlarged his mind; and what is more attractive and meritorious than enlargement of mind? An Englishman is apt to be narrow from his *insular* situation; and the opinions and customs of our nation are generally somewhat intolerant and overbearing. There are many luxuries which seem necessaries to us before we quit our country, but which we soon learn to dispense with; and at last find to be not worth the smallest sacrifice or cost.

LETTER II.

29th October, 1824.

HORACE says, "*Post equitem sedet atra cura,*" we cannot fly from care, or escape it by travelling. Yet much of the grief, which is aggravated by local associations, may thus be softened; and the health of the frame is improved by change of air, and the exercise of the journey, when not too violent. A familiarity of a few days reconciles us to the inconveniences of hotels, their noise, and, in some degree, even to their dirt.

LETTER III.

Paris, 9th Nov. 1824.

VOITURIER horses attached to our too heavily laden carriages moved but slowly. We were nine days passing to *Paris* from *Lyons*, which we quitted at noon on Friday, 29th October, so that our rests were divided badly among the villages and small auberges. The road is, the whole route, tediously heavy; and the country, for the most part, tame, except in the first ascent from Lyons. We rested on the 29th at the village of *St. Georges Rognains;* 30th at *Tournus;* 31st at *La Roche Peau*, romantically situated in a dell of the mountains, with the ruins of a magnificent feudal castle, towering over the village; 1st Nov. at *Saulieu;* 2d at *Avallon;* 3d at *Auxerre;* 4th at *Sens;* 5th at *Melun;* and on the 6th (Saturday) we reached the capital.

Six years and two months have elapsed since we quitted Paris for Switzerland. I think that I can already perceive vast changes in the appearances of the streets and manners here which have taken place during the lapse of that important period. But I am bound to recollect that I *then* came from London, with which I made the comparison; and *now*, from a familiarity with the more remote parts of the Continent. I shall, therefore, suspend my judgment, as first impressions are commonly too strong.

What may be our destination, after a moderate stay here, remains in the book of fate; my health, and the love of a warmer climate, may force me back to the south of Italy, and then our abode will probably be *Naples*. At present, Paris seems to offer many delightful attractions and luxuries, after the stagnation of Geneva; but I recollect that the excitements of novelty are delusive and short lived. Yet wherever there is a grand concentration of intellect, and the tide of human life is full, there

must be much which will continue to interest and diversify the days of those who exist in the cultivation of their better faculties.

THE END.

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